

Remarks Honoring the 2007 Super Bowl Champion Indianapolis Colts

April 23, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. How about it? Like, the Indianapolis Colts here on the South Lawn—congratulations. Welcome to the Super Bowl champs.

I want to welcome Jim Irsay and Meg and Carlie, Casey, and Kalen. I had the honor of calling Jim after they won. I understand how hard it is to be an owner of a sports team and win. [Laughter] I never did it—[laughter]—but he has, and I congratulate the organization. I congratulate Bill Polian as well. I want to thank all the front office personnel, the schedulers, the ticket sellers, the travel arrangers, the people who never get any credit. I appreciate you being part of a fine organization. And we're here on the South Lawn to congratulate you.

I congratulate the head coach of the Indianapolis Colts, Tony Dungy. And I'm glad his wife, Lauren, is here as well. Tony Dungy is the first African American coach to ever win a Super Bowl. That in itself is a great honor. But interestingly enough, he is a man who has used his—a position of notoriety to behave in a quiet and strong way in the face of personal tragedy that has influenced a lot of our fellow citizens. And I want to thank you for your courage.

Alphonso Jackson is here with us, Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Prior to today, he told me he was a Cowboy fan. [Laughter] Like, what are you doing here, A.J.? Oh, okay, you wanted to see the coach. All right, good. Yes. I thank Randy Tobias, who was an executive from Indianapolis but ran our HIV/AIDS initiative—by the way, helped people in Africa receive antiretroviral drugs. When we came in, there was 50,000 people receiving antiretroviral drugs; now there's 850,000 people receiving antiretroviral drugs. Tobias, thank you for your compassion. Al Hubbard, Economic Adviser to the President, is here—Indianapolis Colt fan.

I want to thank Members of the Congress who have joined us today, starting with Senator Evan Bayh and Susan. It's good to see the Bayh lads with them. Thank you all for coming. Appreciate you being here. Dan

Burton—appreciate you coming, Dan, and, Samia, I'm glad you're here. Thanks for coming, Samia. Mark Souder, Julia Carson, Mike Pence, Baron Hill, Joe Donnelly, and Brad Ellsworth—glad you all are here. Some of these guys get elected for the first time, and the first thing that happens is, the Indianapolis Colts win the Super Bowl. You're not taking credit, are you? [Laughter]

I want to thank all the coaches who are here. I want to thank the families of the Colt family who have helped this organization flourish. I want to—most of all, I want to thank the players. I am proud of you; the country is proud of you. The people from Indiana have supported you, and you didn't let them down. As a matter of fact, this is—last time you won as Colts, though, was 1971. Interesting, I thought about that. Most of you weren't even born. I was, and that's when they beat our Cowboys, A.J. [Laughter] But you've—as Bill put it, he said, "Finally." And a lot of Indianapolis fans said, "Thank goodness." They love to support this team, and you didn't let them down.

It was a pretty tough season, though, when you think about it. It wasn't one of these run-aways. It looked like it was going to be a runaway—Secretary Rice, if you want to come in, please, yes. So, like, you're a big Dungy fan, aren't you?

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Yes, sir.

The President. That's right; that's what I thought.

So the season started off good, like you won the first nine games, and then it appeared this championship team was going to fizzle; it wasn't going to make it. And so they—you lost four out of seven. And they started to, like, write you off, right? They kind of say—you probably—some of these sports writers started to say, you know, well, they don't have what it takes; they can kind of do okay until it comes to the big one, and then they just don't have the character necessary to make it work. They did okay in the wild card, and you move your way through the playoffs, and then all of a sudden, the guy on Super Bowl 41 runs the kickoff back. [Laughter] I'm sure a lot of those skeptics were saying, "Told you so; the Indianapolis Colts, good players, fine people, just don't

have what it takes to win.” But as the coach said, “Our guys just kept saying, ‘We’re going to fight; we’re not going to be denied.’ That heart will take you a long way.”

And so this is a victory for good hearts—good hearts off the field and good hearts on the field. And we congratulate you. Thank you for winning.

So a lot of people here in the White House compound have been really looking forward to seeing Peyton Manning. They wanted to see a guy who gets more air time than I do. [Laughter] I met Peyton Manning. He said, “I’m going to be here during your Presidency. We will be here having won the Super Bowl.” And sure enough, he delivered. And, Peyton, thank you for being a fine person and a good quarterback.

I’m sure Marvin Harrison and Reggie Wayne are saying, thanks for being a good quarterback; thanks for getting us the ball. After all, these two players ranked second and third in the NFL in receiving in the—during the regular season. That’s called balanced attack, particularly when you added that LSU guy, Joseph. Where’s Joseph? There he is. Yes, sir. [Laughter] Congratulations to you. Dominic Rhodes led the NFL in rushing yards in the post-season. You had people who can catch the ball, a guy who can throw the ball, and people who can run the ball.

People held your defense as suspect, but not when it counted. I can remember all the analysts saying, “Well, the defense is a little short this year. They may have the offensive firepower, but they can’t play on the other side of the ball.” Until it mattered, and then the defense stood up and helped this team become a Super Bowl champ.

And so to the offense, congratulations on doing what people expected. To the defense, thanks for helping this team be here in the White House as well.

It’s good to be the presence of Adam Vinatieri—again. [Laughter] The man knows how to pick a winner—[laughter]—and help contribute to a winner. You know, in 2005, he didn’t make it to the White House, and I asked why. It was a simple matter of he and his wife were having a child. I hope the kid is doing well.

Adam Vinatieri. Thank you.

The President. We’re glad you’re here, Adam; thank you very much.

I appreciate what guard Ryan Lilja said. He said, “The whole team has fought hard the whole season, through ups and downs.” Isn’t that what life is about; isn’t it, really? Through the ups—it’s easy to fight hard in the ups. It’s when the downs come that you’ve got to be a fighter. He said, “I couldn’t be prouder to be a part of this football team.”

And I couldn’t be prouder to welcome the football team to the South Lawn of the White House. I appreciate what this team does. I appreciate the example you set. I appreciate the fact that you understand that off the field, a lot of people are looking at you to determine whether or not they want to be like you.

I thank you very much for the “Bleed Blood Blue Drive”—that’s hard for a guy from west Texas to say—[laughter]—“Bleed Blood Blue Drive,” in which you’ve encouraged 2,000 people to donate blood. I appreciate the book drives that you’ve held to promote literacy in the State of Indiana. I appreciate the food drives that you’ve held to fight hunger in the State of Indiana. I appreciate the Colts Football Fund.

Most of all, I appreciate you all. Thanks for coming. God bless.

Jim Irsay. Mr. President, we have a special gift to present to you from the Irsay family and the Colts organization. I knew that you’d love these specially made cowboy hats. We have some special dedications inside there for you, sir, and I hope you’ll enjoy it.

The President. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Irsay. You’re welcome.

The President. Pretty snazzy, huh? [Laughter] Yes, thank you.

Tony Dungy. And on behalf of the team, we got you a Bush Colts jersey. We normally go number 1, but in this case, we had to go 43.

The President. Yes, that’s right. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:08 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jim Irsay, owner, Bill Polian, president, Marvin Harrison and Reggie Wayne, wide receivers, Joseph Addai, running back, Dominic Rhodes, former running back, Adam Vinatieri,

kicker, and Ryan Lilja, offensive guard, Indianapolis Colts; and Meg Coyle Irsay, wife of Jim Irsay, and their daughters, Carlie, Casey, and Kalen.

Statement on the Death of Boris Yeltsin

April 23, 2007

Laura and I are deeply saddened by the death of former Russian President Boris Yeltsin. President Yeltsin was an historic figure who served his country during a time of momentous change. He played a key role as the Soviet Union dissolved, helped lay the foundations of freedom in Russia, and became the first democratically elected leader in that country's history. I appreciate the efforts that President Yeltsin made to build a strong relationship between Russia and the United States. We offer our sincerest condolences to the Yeltsin family and to the Russian people.

Statement on the Identity Theft Task Force Report

April 23, 2007

I commend Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission Deborah Majoras for their work on the Identity Theft Task Force report released today. The report is the culmination of many months of hard work by numerous Federal agencies. Identity theft is a serious problem in America, and my administration is working to combat this crime and to assist its victims. I thank the Attorney General, the Chairman, and their staffs for taking on this difficult and important assignment.

Remarks on Congressional Action on Emergency Supplemental Appropriations

April 24, 2007

Good morning. Seventy-eight days ago, I sent Congress a request for emergency war funding that our troops urgently need. I made it clear to Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill that I'm willing to discuss our differences on the way forward in Iraq. But I

also made it clear, our troops should not be caught in the middle of that discussion.

Yesterday Democratic leaders announced that they plan to send me a bill that will fund our troops only if we agree to handcuff our generals, add billions of dollars in unrelated spending, and begin to pull out of Iraq by an arbitrary date. I'm disappointed that the Democratic leadership has chosen this course.

The bill they announced yesterday includes some of the worst parts of the measures they had earlier passed with narrow majorities in the House and the Senate. They know I'm going to veto a bill containing these provisions, and they know that my veto will be sustained. But instead of fashioning a bill I could sign, the Democratic leaders chose to further delay funding our troops, and they chose to make a political statement. That's their right, but it is wrong for our troops, and it's wrong for our country.

To accept the bill proposed by the Democratic leadership would be to accept a policy that directly contradicts the judgment of our military commanders. I strongly believe that the Democrats' proposal would undermine our troops and threaten the safety of the American people here at home. And here is why.

First, a proposal would mandate the withdrawal of American troops beginning as early as July 1st of this year, and no later than October 1st of this year, despite the fact that General Petraeus has not yet received all the reinforcements he needs. It makes no sense to tell the enemy when you start to plan withdrawing. If we were to do so, the enemy would simply mark their calendars and begin plotting how to take over a country when we leave.

We know what could happen next. Just as Al Qaida used Afghanistan as a base to plan attacks of September the 11th, Al Qaida could make Iraq a base to plan even more deadly attacks. The lesson of 9/11 is that allowing terrorists to find a sanctuary anywhere in the world can have deadly consequences on the streets of our own cities.

Precipitous withdrawal from Iraq is not a plan to bring peace to the region or to make our people safer at home. Instead, it would