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Statement on the Appointment of Tony Blair as Quartet Representative in the Middle East

June 27, 2007

Earlier today I spoke with Prime Minister Blair. It has been my pleasure to work with Tony Blair over the last 6½ years. He is not only a friend but is also a visionary leader who has prepared his country to face challenges and opportunities over the horizon. Tony is a man who stands up for his beliefs and has the courage of his convictions. Because of his steadfast resolve in the war on terror, millions of people around the world now enjoy the great rights of freedom and democracy.

I am pleased that this capable man has agreed to continue his work for peace in the Middle East. I welcome the appointment of Tony Blair as the Quartet representative. In his new role, Tony will help Palestinians develop the political and economic institutions they will need for a democratic, sovereign state able to provide for its people and live in peace and security with Israel. I thank him for his willingness to give his time to this goal, which would be a historic step toward peace in the Middle East.

As he leaves the post of Prime Minister and as he undertakes a new role as Quartet representative, the people of the United States of America express our gratitude for his strong friendship and his continued efforts to lay the foundations for freedom in the Middle East.

Remarks on the Nomination of Admiral Michael G. Mullen To Be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General James E. Cartwright To Be Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

June 28, 2007

The President. Good morning. Thank you all for coming. Mr. Secretary, thank you for

joining us. I am sending to the United States Senate my nomination of Admiral Mike Mullen to be America's next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I'm sending my nomination of General James Cartwright to be the next Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Mike Mullen and Hoss Cartwright are experienced military officers. They're highly qualified for these important positions. I thank them for agreeing to serve their country in these new capacities. We welcome Mike's wife, Deborah, and sons, John and Michael. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for wearing the uniform. Hoss's wife got stuck on an airplane. [*Laughter*] I'm sure she's going to forgive him—[*laughter*]—and hopefully forgive me. I thank you all for being here and joining on this—joining these good men on this exciting day for them.

America is at war, and we're at war with brutal enemies who have attacked our Nation and who would pursue nuclear weapons, who would use their control over oil as economic blackmail, and who intend to launch new attacks on our country. In such times, one of the most important decisions a President makes is the appointment of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chairman is our Nation's highest-ranking military officer. He is the principal military adviser to the President, to the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council. He is responsible for ensuring that our military forces are ready to meet any challenge.

Admiral Mike Mullen is uniquely qualified to take on these important responsibilities. Mike has had an illustrious military career, spanning nearly four decades. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1968. He earned an advanced degree from the Naval Postgraduate School. He has commanded three ships, a cruiser-destroyer group, and an aircraft carrier battle group. He served as commander of NATO's Joint Forces Command in Naples, Italy, with responsibility for Alliance missions in the Balkans, Iraq, and Mediterranean. He served as commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe.

At the Pentagon, he has served as the Navy's Director of Surface Warfare, Deputy

Chief of Naval Operations for Resources, Requirements, and Assessments, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, and Chief of Naval Operations. Mike is a man of experience, of vision, and high integrity. He is the right man to lead America's Armed Forces. And, Mike, I thank you for agreeing to take on this important assignment.

I'm also nominating an outstanding military officer to serve as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hoss Cartwright. He's a graduate of the University of Iowa. He earned an advanced degree from the Naval War College. He completed a fellowship at MIT. He's a Marine aviator who has commanded deployed marines at all levels. He has broad experience on the Joint Staff, having served twice in the Directorate of Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment.

And since 2004, he's served as head of the U.S. Strategic Command. In that position, Hoss has been in charge of America's nuclear arsenal, missile defenses, space operations, information operations, global command and control, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and our Nation's efforts to combat weapons of mass destruction. These are vital responsibilities, and Hoss has met them with honor, skill, and integrity. He has earned my trust and my confidence. He's going to make an outstanding Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Upon confirmation by the Senate, Mike Mullen and Hoss Cartwright will succeed two of America's finest military officers, General Pete Pace and Admiral Ed Giambastiani. Pete Pace has been at my side most of my Presidency, serving first as my Vice Chairman—as the Vice Chairman and then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We've been through a lot together. Pete was with me after the attacks of September the 11th. He played a key role in planning America's response to that brutal assault on the American homeland.

With the help of his leadership, our men and women in uniform brought down brutal dictatorships in Afghanistan and Iraq. It liberated 50 million people from unspeakable oppression. He's helped lead our military through unprecedented campaigns. And as he has done so, Pete never took his eye off

the horizon and the threats that still lie ahead. He played a critical role in transforming our military for challenges of a new century. He made sure that future benefits—future generations will benefit from the reforms that he has set in motion.

Pete made history as the first marine to serve as Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I'm going to remember him simply as one of the best military officers and finest men I've been privileged to know. I'm grateful for his friendship, his sense of humor, and his character. I also thank him for the life of service, and I thank his wife, Lynne, and his children as well.

I'm also grateful to Admiral Ed Giambastiani. I just call him "Admiral G." I appreciated his outstanding leadership as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. He's an officer of character and vision, and I appreciate his insights and his strong military advice.

Prior to his service as Vice Chairman, Admiral G helped lead the transformation of our military as commander of the U.S. Joint Forces Command. He helped strengthen the NATO Alliance as the first Supreme Allied Commander Transformation. Ed has given 37 years of dedicated service to our country. His work will affect the security of our Nation for decades to come. I thank him for his devotion to duty. I thank his wife, Cindy, and their children as well.

Pete Pace and Ed Giambastiani are hard acts to follow. I can think of none more qualified to follow them than the men whose nominations I am sending to the United States Senate today. I call on the Senate to quickly confirm Mike Mullen and Hoss Cartwright. I thank these fine officers and their families for continuing to serve our country.

Thank you all for coming.

[At this point, Chairman-designate Adm. Mullen and Vice Chairman-designate Gen. Cartwright made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you all. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:47 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks

of Chairman-designate Adm. Mullen and Vice Chairman-designate Gen. Cartwright.

Remarks at the Naval War College and a Question-and-Answer Session in Newport, Rhode Island

June 28, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks, Governor; appreciate you—go find a nice seat. *[Laughter]* I am really pleased to be among the best and brightest of the United States military. I am pleased to be with many here who represent nations from around the world. Thanks for coming by. *[Laughter]* Those who go to school here are at a great place. We actually have some things in common. We went to school in New England. *[Laughter]* We pursued advanced degrees. And we compiled outstanding academic records—*[laughter]*—well, two out of three. *[Laughter]*

The Naval War College is where the United States military does some of its finest thinking. You help the Navy define its mission. You support its combat readiness. You strengthen our maritime security cooperation with other countries. You train our officers to think strategically. And that's important. The United States Navy is one of the most professional and advanced navies in—the world has ever seen, and the men and women of the Naval War College are working to keep it that way, and I appreciate your work.

More than a century ago, the president of this college wrote a book called “The Influence of Sea Power Upon History.” The book was read by Theodore Roosevelt. It affected American strategic thinking for decades to come. Now we're in a new and unprecedented war against violent Islamic extremists. This is an ideological conflict we face against murderers and killers who try to impose their will. These are the people that attacked us on September the 11th and killed nearly 3,000 people. The stakes are high, and once again, we have to change our strategic thinking.

The major battleground in this war is Iraq. And this morning I'm going to give you an update on the strategy we're pursuing in

Iraq. I'll outline some of the indicators that will tell us if we're succeeding. And I appreciate you giving me a chance to come and visit with you.

I appreciate the Governor of this great State and his wife, Sue. I'm proud to call you friend, and thank you very much for your thoughtfulness today. The Governor gave me a helicopter tour of this beautiful part of the world. The tall ships were magnificent.

Rear Admiral Shuford and his wife, Cathy, thanks, as well, for being in the military; thanks for leading; and thanks for inviting me here. I appreciate Rear Admiral Tom Eccles, commander, Naval Undersea Warfare Center. I thank my friends, Governors who have joined us: Governor Jodi Rell, Governor Mark Sanford, Governor Matt Blunt. One day we'll all be members of the ex-Governors club. *[Laughter]* Later, rather than sooner, in your case. *[Laughter]* I appreciate all the other State and local officials, the students here, the faculty here, and the alumni here. Thanks for coming.

Earlier this year, I laid out a new strategy for Iraq. I wasn't pleased with what was taking place on the ground. I didn't approve of what I was seeing. And so I called together our military and said, can we design a different strategy to succeed? And I accepted their recommendations. And this new strategy is different from the one we were pursuing before. It is being led by a new commander, General David Petraeus, and a new ambassador, Ryan Crocker. It recognizes that our top priority must be to help the Iraqi Government and its security forces protect their population from attack, especially in Baghdad, the capital. It's a new mission. And David Petraeus is in Iraq carrying it out. Its goal is to help the Iraqis make progress toward reconciliation, to build a free nation that respects the rights of its people, upholds the rule of law, and is an ally against the extremists in this war.

And it's in our interests, it's in our national interests to help them succeed. America has sent reinforcements to help the Iraqis secure their population. In other words, one of the decisions I had to make was, what should our troop levels be? I asked the military what they thought the troop levels ought to be.