

Remarks on the Nomination of Judge Michael B. Mukasey To Be Attorney General

September 17, 2007

Good morning. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Judge Michael Mukasey to be the 81st Attorney General of the United States. Judge, thank you for agreeing to serve.

The Attorney General serves as our Nation's chief law enforcement officer. The Attorney General has an especially vital role to play in a time of war, and when we face the challenges—and we face the challenge of protecting our people on a daily basis from deadly enemies, while at the same time protecting our freedom.

Judge Mukasey brings impressive credentials to this task. In 1987, he was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to the United States District Court of the Southern District of New York. It's one of the country's busiest and most respected trial courts. He sat on that court for more than 18 years, and he earned the reputation as a tough, but fair judge. For 6 of those years, he was the chief judge, and he was a sound manager and a strong leader. Throughout his time on the bench, Judge Mukasey was widely admired for his brilliance and his integrity.

Mike has experience in the Justice Department and private practice, as well as having served on the bench. He served 4 years as an Assistant United States Attorney in Manhattan, where he tried many cases and he developed expertise in the workings of the criminal justice system. He's also worked as a partner in a law firm, and he holds degrees from Columbia University and Yale Law School.

Some of Judge Mukasey's most important legal experience is in the area of national security. Judge Mukasey presided over the trial of the terrorist known as "the Blind Sheikh" and his codefendants in the conspiracy to destroy prominent New York City landmarks, including bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993.

Before the 9/11 attacks, this was one of the most important terrorism cases in our Nation's history, and the verdict in that case was affirmed on appeal. In affirming the con-

victions, the appeals court signaled out the judge for praise. I found it very interesting of—what they said. Here's what they wrote: "The Honorable Michael B. Mukasey presided with extraordinary skill and patience, assuring fairness to the prosecution and to each defendant, and helpfulness to the jury. His was an outstanding achievement in the face of challenges far beyond those normally endured by a trial judge."

When the World Trade Center was attacked again, Judge Mukasey quickly reopened his court, even though it was just blocks from Ground Zero. He recognized the importance of maintaining a functioning justice system in the midst of a national emergency. He and other judges in his district worked day and night to ensure that applications for warrants were processed, investigations could proceed, and the rule of law was upheld.

Judge Mukasey is clear-eyed about the threat our Nation faces. As a judge and a private lawyer, he's written on matters of constitutional law and national security. He knows what it takes to fight this war effectively, and he knows how to do it in a manner that is consistent with our laws and our Constitution. And when confirmed by the Senate as Attorney General, he will work to ensure that our law enforcement and intelligence officers have the tools they need to protect the United States and our citizens.

When he takes his place at the Department of Justice, he will succeed another fine judge, Alberto Gonzales. From his days as a supreme court justice in Texas to his years as White House Counsel and as Attorney General of the United States, this honorable and decent man has served with distinction. I've known Al and his family for more than a decade. He's a dear friend and a trusted adviser. I'm going to miss him, and I wish Al and Becky all the best.

With Mike Mukasey, the Justice Department will be in the hands of a great lawyer and an accomplished public servant. Mike has shown good judgment in the courtroom; he's shown good judgment outside the courtroom. After all, he married a teacher. And we welcome Susan here, as well as son Marc and daughter Jessica. Thank you all for coming. He's also brought his sister, Rhoda, and

brother-in-law, Norm. I want to thank you all for supporting Mike as he takes on this important responsibility for our country.

It's a pivotal time for our Nation, and it's vital that the position of Attorney General be filled quickly. I urge the Senate to confirm Judge Mukasey promptly. Until the judge is confirmed, Assistant Attorney General Paul Keisler will serve as Acting Attorney General. Accepting this assignment requires Peter—I said Peter—Peter Keisler. Accepting this assignment requires Peter to delay the departure date he announced earlier this month, and I appreciate his willingness to do so. Peter is the Acting Attorney General. Paul Clement, who agreed to take on this role, will remain focused on his duties as Solicitor General, so he can prepare for the Supreme Court term that begins just 2 weeks from today.

Judge, I'm grateful for answering our Nation's call to serve. I look forward to welcoming you as the next Attorney General of the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Omar Ahmed Ali Abdel Rahman (also known as "the Blind Sheikh"), former spiritual leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and former leader of the Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiyya terrorist organization. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General-designate Mukasey.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Jose Socrates of Portugal

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The President. Thank you for coming. It has been my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of a steady ally and a good friend to the Oval Office. Not only does Prime Minister Socrates represent a close friend; he also has got an important assignment, and that is to lead the EU right now. And so we had—we discussed our bilateral relations. I asked the Prime Minister, I said, "How would you frame our bilateral relations?" He said, "Good." Well, you know, I feel the same way. And I thank you for coming.

I do want to thank the people of Portugal for supporting your decision to help the people of Iraq and Afghanistan realize the blessings of freedom, and I appreciate that. I know those aren't easy decisions to make, but the people in those countries that believe that they should live in a free society and want to live in a free society appreciate your contributions as well.

And I thank you very much for the comprehensive dialog we've had on issues of common concern as the—in your role as the—at the EU. First, we discussed and confirmed that the transatlantic relations are very important for the United States and the EU. And the Prime Minister said he wants to work closely with the United States, and I said I want to work closely with the Prime Minister to keep the transatlantic ties very strong.

Secondly, we talked about issues like Darfur, Doha. We talked about Kosovo and the Middle East. And both of us are committing to working together to see if we can't solve those problems, or at least put them in a better position.

And so, Mr. Prime Minister, you're welcome here any time. I appreciate that you're setting such a good example for people in your own country and around the world by being an avid exerciser at the ripe old age of 50.

Prime Minister Socrates. Thank you.

President Bush. And you're welcome to come to the Oval Office again. Please.

Prime Minister Socrates. Thank you, Mr. President. It was a very sympathetic conversation with you. And thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to present to you what are the priorities for Europe in the months ahead. In particular, we had the opportunity to discuss the transatlantic relation and importance to Europe on the relation with the United States. As a matter of fact, I don't see any strategic question for the world that don't demand, require the most—the better relations between Europe and United States.

And thank you also for the opportunity to discuss some of our more delicate matters