

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, January 18, 2008

Remarks Following a Meeting With Senior Administration Officials and an Exchange With Reporters at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait

January 12, 2008

Good morning. I just had a really good meeting with Ambassador Crocker, General Petraeus, Secretary Rice, and members of my national security team. We discussed the situation in Iraq. We discussed the progress that's being made, the challenges that lie ahead, and we discussed the fact that what happens in Iraq impacts everything else in this vital region.

I really appreciate you all coming over, but more importantly, I appreciate your service to the country.

One year ago, I addressed the American people to announce a new way forward in Iraq. At that time, Iraq was riven by sectarian violence. The violence had increased over the course of 2006, and it threatened the collapse of the political process. Economic activity was languishing. Al Qaida was strengthening its grip in critical parts of Iraq, including parts of the capital city of Baghdad. Shi'a extremist groups, some with the backing from Iran, were increasing their attacks on coalition and Iraqi forces.

Our strategy simply wasn't working. And the world was watching. Our friends and foes had the same question: Would we turn our back on our friends and allow Iraq to descend into chaos? Or would we change our approach and stand with the Iraqi people and help them take back their country from the terrorists and extremists?

We chose to support our Iraqi partners; we chose to help them protect the Iraqi people from the terrorists and radicals. The new way forward I announced 1 year ago changed our approach in fundamental ways. We sent more combat troops to Iraq. We refocused their mission to protecting the Iraqi people and to fighting the enemy in the strongholds

and denying sanctuary anywhere in the country. We began a diplomatic surge to cut off the networks of foreign fighters that were flowing into Iraq from Syria and to cut the support of Shi'a extremists coming from Iran and to encourage the region to give more support to the Iraqi Government. We surged civilians into Iraq to support our military efforts, doubling the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams and facilitating Iraqi political reconciliation from the bottom up.

I nominated General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to carry out this new strategy. This was a tough assignment for them. And they and all the good men and women they're privileged to lead are doing an outstanding job.

Iraq is now a different place from 1 year ago. Much hard work remains, but levels of violence are significantly reduced. Hope is returning to Baghdad, and hope is returning to towns and villages throughout the country. Iraqis who fled the violence are beginning to return and rebuild their lives.

Al Qaida remains dangerous, and it will continue to target the innocent with violence. But we've dealt Al Qaida in Iraq heavy blows, and it now faces a growing uprising of ordinary Iraqis who want to live peaceful lives. Extremist militias remain a concern, but they too have been disrupted, and moderates are turning on those who espouse violence. Iran's role in fomenting violence has been exposed. Iranian agents are in our custody, and we are learning more about how Iran has supported extremist groups with training and lethal aid.

Iraqis are gradually take control of their country. Over the past year, Iraqi forces conducted a surge of their own, generating well over 100,000 more Iraqi police and soldiers to sustain the security gains. Tens of thousands of concerned local citizens are protecting their communities and working with coalition and Iraqi forces to ensure Al Qaida

cannot return. The Iraqi Government is distributing oil revenues across the country so that reconstruction can follow hard-won security gains. And from Kirkuk to Ramadi to Karbala to Baghdad, the people of Iraq—Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurd—are coming together at the grassroots to build a common future.

These improvements are allowing some U.S. forces to return home—a return on success that has now begun. One Army brigade and one Marine expeditionary unit have already come home, and they will not be replaced. In the coming months, four additional brigades and two Marine battalions will follow suit. Any additional reduction will be based on the recommendation of General Petraeus, and those recommendations will be based entirely on the conditions on the ground in Iraq.

The months ahead offer prospects for further progress. Iraq's local leaders need to continue to improve conditions from the bottom up. And Iraq's national leaders need to follow up on the successful adoption of pension reform by passing a revised de-Ba'athification law and a national budget. And the linkages between the local and national levels must be strengthened and expanded. Iraqi security forces need to continue to grow and improve and take the fight to Al Qaida and other extremist groups. Criminals need to be defeated in Iraqi neighborhoods. Syria needs to further reduce the flow of terrorists to the territory, especially suicide bombers. Iran must stop supporting the militia special groups that attack Iraqi and coalition forces and kidnap and kill Iraqi officials.

The international community must remain engaged, including through the third expanded ministerial meeting on Iraq, which will take place right here in Kuwait. I had the honor last night of telling His Highness how much we appreciated the fact that Kuwait has taken the lead in hosting these meetings.

We cannot take the achievements of 2007 for granted. We must do all we can to ensure that 2008 brings even greater progress for Iraq's young democracy.

America is going to do our part. Long-term success in Iraq is vital to our friends here in the region and to America's national secu-

rity. And long-term success will require active U.S. engagement that outlasts my Presidency. So at the invitation of Iraqi leaders, we're now building an enduring relationship with Iraq. This relationship will have diplomatic, economic, and security components, similar to relationships we have with Kuwait and other nations in this region and around the world. Most important, in a place where Saddam Hussein once menaced the world, the new U.S.-Iraqi relationship will strengthen a democracy that serves its people, fights terrorists, and serves as a beacon of freedom for millions across the Middle East.

Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus will continue to carry out our policy in Iraq. And they need to get back to Baghdad, so I better stop talking. I want to thank them for your service. I want you to thank your families for how much I appreciate your sacrifices. I also want to thank the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen, as well as the diplomats, intelligence officers, civilian employees, and contractors and all their families who are doing the work necessary to lay the foundation for peace.

Thank you all for being here, and God bless you.

I'll answer a couple of questions. I'm going to ask them to lay out for a second; hold on for a minute.

Yes.

U.S. Troop Levels in Iraq/Appreciation for Americans Serving Overseas

Q. Mr. President, did you hear anything today that makes you think that you can accelerate the troop withdrawals that you already talked about?

The President. General Petraeus made it clear to me that, from his perspective, that conditions on the ground will be that which guides his recommendations. And I made it clear that's what I want. In other words, our general has got to understand that success in Iraq is critical. In other words, that ought to be the primary concern when it comes to determining troop levels. And no better person to ask as to—on how to achieve success in Iraq than the general in charge of Iraq.

So that's what we discussed about—he didn't talk about specific levels; he talked about continually assessing the situation on

the ground and will report to Congress in March. I wanted to assure him that any decision he recommends needs to be based upon success. That's what happened the last time around. When we were failing, I said, what's it take to—what do you need to win, not lose? What is it we need to—what troop levels do we need to make sure that we can achieve this objective?

And a lot of people thought that I was going to recommend pulling out or pulling back. Quite the contrary; I recommended increasing the number of forces so they could get more in the fight because I believe all along, if people are given a chance to live in a free society, they'll do the hard work necessary to live in a free society.

And I understand the fundamental conflict we're in. We're in a conflict between those who want to live in peace and those who murder the innocent to achieve a hateful vision. People say, "What are you talking about, hateful vision?" Well, I said, all you got to do is look at what life was like if you were a young girl under the Taliban in Afghanistan. These haters have no vision of hope. They want to impose their ideology on every man, woman, and child in the societies which they feel like they should dominate. Our vision is different, and the vision of most Iraqis is different, and that is, they want to be free; they want to be able to express themselves in a free society. And I believe, if given a chance, the ordinary citizen will sacrifice for that vision every time. But they needed the security—they needed the feeling of security in order to do so.

So it's that same principle that's going to guide my decision. And I made it clear to the general that I need to know his considered judgment about what it takes to make sure the security gains we have achieved remain in place. And that's what the discussion was about—besides me thanking him.

But we cannot take for granted our troops overseas and our diplomats overseas. These folks have been gone from their home for a long time, and they miss their families. And so one of the purposes of this trip is to make it abundantly clear to those serving our country that, one, they have earned the respect of the United States of America, and that as the President of a great country, I look

forward to telling these great people how much we admire them and appreciate them.

Yes.

Q. It sounds like you feel like you're on track for a possible drawdown. Can you say that you feel you're on track from what you heard from General Petraeus?

The President. I think the only thing I can tell you we're on track for is to follow through on that which he recommended last September and that we'll be on track getting down to 15. And that's what we're on track for. My attitude is, if he didn't want to continue the drawdown, that's fine with me, in order to make sure we succeed, see. I said to the general, if you want to slow her down, fine; it's up to you. And so the only thing I can tell you we're on track for is, we're doing what we said was going to happen. One battalion is out; the Marines are out to the extent that we said they were going to come out, and then four more are coming down and be out by July, just like he recommended.

Progress in Iraq

Q. What about the political benchmarks? Do those no longer matter?

The President. Of course they matter. They matter to the Iraqis a lot. It's a sign of reconciliation. I just mentioned they passed a pension law, which, of course, got a huge yawn in our press. But that's—well, that's okay. [Laughter] But it was a—we can't pass—we can't reform our own pension system, like Social Security, but they did. And is that the only answer? No. Mean, they got a lot more work to do, but they're passing law. And they're now in the process of a budget—getting their budget passed and a de-Ba'ath law. And we expect them to work hard on the federalism issue. And yes, that's absolutely important—benchmarks.

Q. Are they behind where you thought they would be—the significant benchmarks?

The President. Are they behind? I wouldn't say "significant." I think that's an exaggeration of what I think. I would say that I wish they had passed more law. Of course, in December, I was wishing our Legislature had passed more law at times too. But, no, they've got work to do; no question about it. There are two types of reconciliation: that

which can be achieved by passage of national law; and the other kind is the bottom-up reconciliation, where people in neighborhoods are just—who are sick and tired of criminality and violence say, “Look, let’s do something about it.”

That’s—one of the interesting things, Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News], and you follow this a lot closer than a lot of these other folks have—not to be blowing your horn or anything, but—is these concerned citizen groups—CLCs, people who have stepped forward and said, we’ve had enough of this; we’re sick and tired of violence. Some 80,000 local citizens who are now helping provide local security so their children can have—grow up in a free society and they can be peaceful—that’s what you’re seeing. And a part of the Iraqi surge was not only 100,000 additional troops and police but local citizens coming forward and to—helping to provide security for their neighborhoods. And that’s bottom-up reconciliation.

I’m not making excuses for a government, but to go from a tyranny to a democracy overnight is virtually impossible. And so when you say, am I pleased with the progress—what they have gone through and where they are today I think is good progress. Have they done enough? No. Are we going to continue to work with them to do more? Absolutely. Absolutely. Our message is very clear: It’s in your interest that you pass good law. And so I’m optimistic they’ll get laws passed here pretty quick, and we’ll continue to press to make it happen.

Listen, thank you very much. I’m going to speak to the troops, and I’m looking forward to it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait.

Remarks to Military Personnel at Camp Arifjan

January 12, 2008

The President. Hooah!

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Yes, thanks for coming out. [Laughter] It’s good to see you. Command Sergeant Major Harbin, thank—he’s a silver-tongued fox. [Laughter] Thank you for the introduction, Command Sergeant. I’m honored to be introduced by one of our enlisted personnel. After all, our military is strong because of the sergeant corps of the military.

I’m also proud to be with our officers. I particularly want to thank General Lovelace for his leadership. I’m honored to be with the brave men and women of the 3d Army. I also offer greetings to the marines, sailors, airmen, coast guardsmen—

Audience member. Woo-hoo! [Laughter]

The President. —as well as all the Department of Army civilians—

Audience member. Hooray! [Laughter]

The President. I’m here to thank you for your service. I want you to know, the American people are mighty proud of you, and so am I. Sorry my wife is not with me. She was here the other day, though. She sends her best. I’m traveling today with the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. I just had a meeting with our Ambassador and our commander on the ground in Iraq. I’m proud to be here with Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus.

Since the 3d Army was established at the close of World War I, its soldiers have proven themselves true to their motto, “The Third . . . Always First.” You’re the first bunch I’ve been talking to here on my trip, first bunch of those wearing the uniform. People say, “You looking forward to the trip?” I said, one thing I’m really looking forward to is seeing the men and women who represent the United States in our military. The reason I am is—anxious to be here is because we can’t thank you enough and we can’t thank your families enough for doing the hard work necessary to protect the United States of America.

I appreciate what this 3d Army did in World War II. I hope you do too as well. After all, you’re members of Patton’s own; played a vital role in the destruction of the Nazi war machine. They helped liberate about 12,000 towns; at least that’s according to the history of the 3d Army. From their noble ranks came soldiers with some of our

Nation's highest directors [decorations],* including 19 recipients of the Medal of Honor. You—a distinguished history, and you're making history yourselves. Sometimes it's hard to forecast what the history pages are going to see when you're right in the midst of it all. Sometimes it's hard to judge how the 3d Army will be talked about by future Presidents when you're in the midst of protecting the country, when you're in the midst of dealing in a dangerous region.

But I want to tell you what the history will say. The history will say, it was when you were called upon, you served, and the service you rendered was absolutely necessary to defeat an enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. It will say loud and clear that this military, comprised of brave men and women who sacrificed on behalf of a noble cause called peace—the men and women of this military understood that we're in an ideological struggle; that we're facing coldblooded murderers who kill the innocent to achieve their hateful vision of a future.

And they understood, history will show that those who wore the uniform in the beginning of the 21st century understood a timeless truth: that the ideology of—based upon liberty is necessary for peace; that in this ideological struggle, on the short term, we will find and bring the enemies to justice. But in the long term, the best way to defeat the ideology of hate is one with an ideology of hope, and that's one with liberty at its fundamental core.

It's hard work that you're doing, but it's necessary work. It's hard to be away from your home, but that's a soldier's life. When you get to e-mailing your family, you tell them I check in with you. [Laughter] And you're looking pretty good. It looks like you haven't missed a meal. [Laughter] But you also tell them that the message I brought was, they're in this fight as well. And the citizens of the United States of America respect our military, and we respect our military families. And this Government will make sure that our families have a good life, with good support, when you're deployed overseas.

* White House correction.

And so I thank you for what you're doing. There is no doubt in my mind that we will succeed. There is no doubt in my mind, when history was written, the final page will say, victory was achieved by the United States of America for the good of the world; that by doing the hard work now, we can look back and say, the United States of America is more secure and generations of Americans will be able to live in peace.

God bless you, and God bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Command Sgt. Maj. Don Harbin, USA, command sergeant major, Area Support Group—Kuwait; Lt. Gen. James L. Lovelace, USA, commanding general, 3d Army; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks Prior to a Discussion on Democracy and Development With Kuwaiti Women in Kuwait City, Kuwait

January 12, 2008

The President. I want to thank these ladies from Kuwait for joining me and the Charge. I'm really looking forward to the conversation. Laura had met with some before and came back very impressed by the spirit and desire of Kuwaiti women to be full participants in Kuwaiti society.

First, I'd like to thank His Highness for his hospitality. Secondly, last night in a conversation with His Highness, I said, "Any regrets about having women vote in elections and run for elections?" He said, "Absolutely not." He said, "Our society is enriched by the participation of our women." And he's right. All societies are enriched by the participation of women. I happen to believe very strongly in the freedom agenda, and I think an integral part of that agenda is making sure that all participants in society have got an equal voice.

And one of the interesting—I think when people look back at the history of the Middle East and history of the world, it's going to be women who helped lead the freedom agenda. And it's happening right here in Kuwait. We've had people here at the table who

ran for Kuwaiti parliament. And Jenan ran; she said—I told her the first race I ever ran, I lost. [*Laughter*]. And she said, “Well, the first race I ever ran, I lost too.” But she intends to win next time around.

And so I appreciate you all coming. I’m honored to be with you. We want to help. Part of our democracy agenda, of course, is the empowerment of women.

And so thank you for taking time. Doctor, would you like to have a few comments?

Former Health Minister Maasouma Al-Mubarak of Kuwait. Of course. First of all, we’d like to welcome you, Mr. President. As you probably watched our media this morning, the media said that we are saying it from the deep of our hearts: Welcome, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Al-Mubarak. Definitely, we Kuwaitis look with great appreciation to the role that the American people played in the liberation of Kuwait, and we remember with great appreciation your father role, Mr. Bush. And we call him here in Kuwait, Bu Abdullah. That means he’s so close to us, and the role that he played, really still and forever, we remember it as Kuwaitis.

And looking to the domestic issues in Kuwait, and especially the freedom that we are enjoying, looking to this group of ladies that are gathered totally by the Embassy, this is something that you don’t have it much in lots of the countries and rarely in the Middle Eastern countries. Our Government has nothing to do with the gathering and nothing to do with this election of the people. And that gives a great idea that we speak our minds; we speak our hearts. And we are so glad to be with you, Mr. President.

And regarding the issues, really we have in mind, Mr. President, as women and as mothers, we’re really asking you, as a person and as the leader of the great United States, for—to put an end for the agony of mothers in Kuwait, for the people, and for our fellow citizens in Guantanamo. And we are sure that your human feelings so much with us in that, and we need really your role and your assistance in that regard.

And also, as citizens and people from this region, we deserve to live in peace. We are looking forward to live in peace. We are real-

ly—not only in Kuwait but in the whole region, this region, the Gulf region, suffered for years and years from—suffering from the wars and the impact of the wars. And we need your assistance, your help, your good will to have peace in this part of the world. And as you’ve played lots of roles in having peace and security in lot of part of the world—you, your father, and the other President.

Again, welcome, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. at the U.S. Embassy. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Chief of Mission and Charge d’Affaires Alan Misenheimer of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait; Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait; and Jenan Boushehri, former candidate for the Kuwait Municipal Council.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony in Manama, Bahrain

January 12, 2008

Your Majesty, thank you very much for bestowing upon me the award. I’m most honored. I accept it on behalf of the people of the United States of America. I also thank you and the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister for your gracious hospitality. I am really honored to be the first U.S. sitting President to have visited your country. Perhaps I should say, it’s about time.

The American people have a long friendship with the people of Bahrain. For decades, Bahrain has welcomed the United States Navy and is now home to our 5th Fleet. Two years ago, I was pleased to sign legislation that strengthened our friendship and our relationship. It was the free trade agreement with Bahrain; it’s America’s first such agreement with any nation in the Gulf. This agreement is helping to pave way to freer and fairer trade between our countries so we can create jobs and opportunity and hope in both our lands.

Our two nations share a common vision for the future of the Middle East. Through our alliance, we share the burdens and risks of maintaining security as well as defending freedom throughout the region. We also believe in the power of democratic reform.

Your Majesty, I appreciate the fact that you're on the forefront of providing hope for people through democracy. Your nation has held two free elections since 2000. And in 2006, your people elected a woman to your parliament. Bahrain's reforms are making your nation stronger. You're showing strong leadership, and you're showing the way forward for other nations.

Your Majesty, I look forward to our meetings later today. I look forward to discussing how we continue—can continue to advance peace in the Middle East. I look forward to sharing with you my experiences that I had in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. I look forward to talking about how we can continue to ensure security in the Gulf. Together we will continue to strengthen our friendship and our cooperation, and I'm proud to be with you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. at Sakhir Palace. In his remarks, he referred to King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, and Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa of Bahrain. He also referred to Lateefa al-Geood, who was the first woman elected to the Council of Representatives of the National Assembly of Bahrain in 2006.

The President's Radio Address

January 12, 2008

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from the Middle East, where I have been meeting with friends and allies. We're discussing how we can work together to confront the extremists who threaten our future. And I have encouraged them to take advantage of the historic opportunity we have before us to advance peace, freedom, and security in this vital part of the world.

My first stop was Israel and the Palestinian Territories. I had good meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian President Abbas. Both these men are committed to peace in the Holy Land. Both these men have been elected by their people. And both share a vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

I came away encouraged by my meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Each

side understands that the key to achieving its own goals is helping the other side achieve its goals. For the Israelis, their main goal is ensuring the safety of their people and the security of their nation. For the Palestinians, the goal is a state of their own, where they can enjoy the dignity that comes with sovereignty and self-government.

In plain language, the result must be the establishment of a free and democratic homeland for the Palestinian people, just as Israel is a free and democratic homeland for the Jewish people. For this to happen, the Israelis must have secure, recognized, and defensible borders, and the Palestinians must have a state that is viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent. Achieving this vision will require tough decisions and painful concessions from both sides.

I believe that a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians that defines a Palestinian state is possible this year. Prime Minister Olmert made clear to me that he understands a democratic Palestinian state is in the long-term security interests of Israel. President Abbas is committed to achieving this Palestinian state through negotiation. The United States cannot impose an agreement on the Israelis and Palestinians; that is something they must work out themselves. But with hard work and good will on both sides, they can make it happen. And both men are getting down to the serious work of negotiation to make sure it does happen.

The United States will do all we can to encourage these negotiations and promote reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. But the international community has a responsibility to help as well. In particular, the Arab nations of the Gulf have a responsibility both to support President Abbas, Prime Minister Fayyad, and other Palestinian leaders as they work for peace and to work for a larger reconciliation between Israel and the Arab world. And in my meetings with Arab leaders over the next few days, I will urge them to do their part.

A democratic Palestinian state is in the interests of the Palestinians. It is in the long-term security interests of Israel. And it is in the interests of a world at war with terrorists and extremists trying to impose their brutal vision on the Middle East. By helping the

Israeli and Palestinian people lay the foundation for lasting peace, we will help build a more hopeful future for the Holy Land and a safer world for the American people.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:05 p.m. on January 11 at the Bayan Palace Guest House in Kuwait City, Kuwait, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m., e.d.t., on January 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 11 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. Due to the 8-hour time difference, the radio address was broadcast after the President's remarks in Kuwait and Bahrain. In his address, the President referred to Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

January 13, 2008

Dr. Aida, thank you very much for the kind introduction. Ministers, members of the diplomatic corps, and distinguished guests: I am honored by the opportunity to stand on Arab soil and speak to the people of this nation and this region.

Throughout the sweep of history, the lands that the Arab people call home have played a pivotal role in world affairs. These lands sit at the juncture of three great continents, Europe and Asia and Africa. These lands have given birth to three of the world's major religions. These lands have seen the rise and fall of great civilizations. And in the 21st century, these lands are once again playing a central role in the human story.

A great new era is unfolding before us. This new era is founded on the equality of all people before God. This new era is being built with the understanding that power is a trust that must be exercised with the consent of the governed and deliver equal justice under the law. And this new era offers hope for the millions across the Middle East who yearn for a future of peace and progress and opportunity.

Here in Abu Dhabi, we see clearly the outlines of this future. Beginning with the revered father of this country, Sheikh Zayed, you have succeeded in building a prosperous

society out of the desert. You have opened your doors to the world economy. You have encouraged women to contribute to the development of your nation, and they have occupied some of your highest ministerial posts. You have held historic elections for the Federal National Council. You have shown the world a model of a Muslim state that is tolerant toward people of other faiths. I'm proud to stand in a nation where the people have an opportunity to build a better future for themselves and their families. Thank you for your warm hospitality.

In my country, we speak of these developments as the advance of freedom. Others may call it the advance of justice. Yet whatever term we use, the ideal is the same. In a free and just society, every person is treated with dignity. In a free and just society, leaders are accountable to those they govern. And in a free and just society, individuals can rise as far as their talents and hard work will take them.

For decades, the people of this region saw their desire for liberty and justice denied at home and dismissed abroad in the name of stability. Today, your aspirations are threatened by violent extremists who murder the innocent in pursuit of power. These extremists have hijacked the noble religion of Islam and seek to impose their totalitarian ideology on millions. They hate freedom and they hate democracy because it fosters religious tolerance and allows people to chart their own future. They hate your Government because it does not share their dark vision. They hate the United States because they know we stand with you in opposition to their brutal ambitions. And everywhere they go, they use murder and fear to foment instability to advance their aims.

One cause of instability is the extremists supported and embodied by the regime that sits in Tehran. Iran is today the world's leading state sponsor of terror. It sends hundreds of millions of dollars to extremists around the world, while its own people face repression and economic hardship at home. It undermines Lebanese hopes for peace by arming and aiding the terrorist group Hizballah. It subverts the hopes for peace in other parts of the region by funding terrorist groups like Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad. It

sends arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Shi'a militants in Iraq. It seeks to intimidate its neighbors with ballistic missiles and bellicose rhetoric. And finally, it defies the United Nations and destabilizes the region by refusing to be open and transparent about its nuclear programs and ambitions. Iran's actions threaten the security of nations everywhere. So the United States is strengthening our longstanding security commitments with our friends in the Gulf and rallying friends around the world to confront this danger, before it is too late.

The other major cause of instability is the extremists embodied by Al Qaida and its affiliates. On September 11th, 2001, Al Qaida murdered nearly 3,000 people on America's home soil. Some of the victims that day were innocent Muslims. And since then, Al Qaida and its allies have killed many more Muslims here in the Middle East, including women and children. In Afghanistan under the Taliban, on Iraq's Anbar Province, they ruled by intimidation and murder. Their goal is to impose that same dark rule across the Middle East. So they seek to topple your governments, acquire weapons of mass destruction, and drive a wedge between the people of the United States and the people of the Middle East. And they will fail. The United States joins you in your commitment to the freedom and security of this region, and we will not abandon you to terrorists or extremists.

The fight against the forces of extremism is the great ideological struggle of our time. And in this fight, our nations have a weapon more powerful than bombs or bullets. It is the desire for freedom and justice written into our hearts by Almighty God, and no terrorists or tyrant can take that away.

We see this desire in the 12 million Iraqis who dipped their fingers in purple ink as they voted in defiance of Al Qaida. We see the desire in the Palestinians who elected a President committed to peace and reconciliation. We see this desire in the thousands of Lebanese whose protests helped rid their country of a foreign occupier. And we see this desire in the brave dissidents and journalists who speak out against terror and oppression and injustice. We see this desire in the ordinary people across the Middle East

who are sick of violence, who are sick of corruption, sick of empty promises, and who choose a free future whenever they are given a chance.

We also see leaders across this region beginning to respond to the desires of their people and take the steps that will help enhance the stability and prosperity of their nations. The recent elections to your Federal National Council represent the first part of a larger reform designed to make your Government more modern and more representative. Algeria held its first competitive Presidential elections. Kuwait held elections in which women were allowed to vote and hold office for the first time. Citizens have voted in municipal elections in Saudi Arabia, in competitive parliamentary elections in Jordan and Morocco and Bahrain, and in a multiparty Presidential election in Yemen. Across the world, the majority of Muslim people live in a free and democratic society, and the people of the Middle East must continue to work for the day where that is also true of the lands that Islam first called home.

As freedom and justice advance in this part of the world, elections are important, but they're only a start. Free and just societies require strong civic institutions, such as houses of worship, universities, professional associations, local governments, and community groups. Free and just societies require habits of self-government that contribute to the rule of law. And free and just societies ultimately depend on the emergence of an engaged public whose citizens feel they have a real stake in their nation's future. All these developments contribute to the bond between government and the governed, between a people and their nation.

Free and just societies also create opportunities for their citizens. This opportunity begins with economic growth. In any society, the greatest resource is not the oil in the ground or the minerals beneath the soil; it is the skills and talents of the people—or as one Nobel winning economist calls this, human capital. Across this region, you have an abundance of human capital in the men and women who are your citizens. By strengthening your education systems and opening your economies, you will unlock

their potential, create vibrant and entrepreneurial societies, and usher in a new era where people have confidence that tomorrow will bring more opportunities than today.

In the last few years, the nations of this region have made some great progress. The World Bank reports that economic growth is strong, and it is rising. Saudi Arabia has joined the World Trade Organization. Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, and Morocco have signed free trade agreements with the United States. Your nations are attracting more foreign investment. Oil accounts for much of the economic growth here, but the nations of the Middle East are now investing in their people and building infrastructure and opening the door to foreign trade and investment.

America supports you in these efforts. We believe that trade and investment is the key to the future of hope and opportunity. We also believe that as we demand you open your markets, we should open ours as well. We're encouraged by the movement toward economic freedom that we're seeing across the Middle East.

Unfortunately, amid some steps forward in this region, we've also seen some setbacks. You cannot build trust when you hold an election where opposition candidates find themselves harassed or in prison. You cannot expect people to believe in the promise of a better future when they are jailed for peacefully petitioning their government. And you cannot stand up a modern and confident nation when you do not allow people to voice their legitimate criticisms.

The United States appreciates that democratic progress requires tough choices. Our own history teaches us that the road to freedom is not always even, and democracy does not come overnight. Yet we also know that for all the difficulties, a society based on liberty is worth the sacrifice. We know that democracy is the only form of government that treats individuals with the dignity and equality that is their right. We know from experience that democracy is the only system of government that yields lasting peace and stability. In a democracy, leaders depend on their people, and most people do not want war and bloodshed and violence. Most people want lives of peace and opportunity. So it is the declared policy of the United States

to support these peoples as they claim their freedom, as a matter of natural right and national interest.

I recognize that some people, including some in my own country, believe it is a mistake to support democratic freedom in the Middle East. They say that the Arab people are not ready for democracy. Of course, that is exactly what people said about the Japanese after World War II. Some said that having an emperor was incompatible with democracy. Some said that the Japanese religion was incompatible with democracy. Some said that advancing freedom in Japan and the Pacific was unwise because our interests lay in supporting pro-American leaders no matter how they ruled their people.

Fortunately, America rejected this advice, kept our faith in freedom, and stood with the people of Asia. The results are now in. Today, the people of Japan have both a working democracy and a hereditary emperor. They have preserved their traditional religious practices while tolerating the faiths of others. They are surrounded by many democracies that reflect the full diversity of the region. Some of these democracies have constitutional monarchies; some have parliaments; and some have presidents. Some of these democracies have Christian majorities; some have Muslim majorities; some have Hindu or Buddhist majorities. Yet for all the differences, the free nations of Asia all derive their authority from the consent of the governed, and all know the lasting stability that only freedom can bring.

This transformation would not have been possible without America's presence and perseverance over many decades. And just as our commitment to Asia helped people there secure their freedom and prosperity, our commitment to the Middle East will help you achieve yours. And you can know from our record in Asia that our commitment is real, it is strong, and it is lasting.

Today, America is using its influence to foster peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land. The Israelis have raised a thriving modern society out of rocky soil and want to live their lives in freedom and security at home and at peace with their neighbors. The Palestinian people aspire to build a nation

of their own, where they can live in dignity and realize their dreams.

Today, Israelis and Palestinians each understand that the only way to realize their own goals is by helping one another. In other words, an independent, viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian state is more than the dream of the Palestinians; it's also the best guarantee for peace for all its neighbors. And the Israelis understand this. Leaders on both sides still have many tough decisions ahead, and they will need to back these decisions with real commitments. But the time has come for a Holy Land where Palestinian and Israeli live together in peace.

America will do our part. In Annapolis in November, the United States invited the Israelis and the Palestinians and other members of the international community to come to a conference. And I appreciate the fact that your country sent a delegate. It was a remarkable thing, to see a Palestinian President and an Israeli Prime Minister address a roomful of Arab leaders together. And the result was that the Palestinians and Israelis launched negotiations for the establishment of a Palestinian state and a broader peace.

The talks are just beginning, and our hopes are high. At the beginning of my trip, I met with both Israeli and Palestinian leaders. I was impressed by their commitment to move forward. And by supporting the legitimate aspirations of both sides, we will encourage reconciliation between the Israeli and Palestinian people, foster reconciliation between Israelis and Arabs, and build a foundation for lasting peace that will contribute to the security of every state in the Gulf.

And as you build a Middle East growing in peace and prosperity, the United States will be your partner. As we have done in places from Asia to Europe, we have forged new relationships with friends and allies, designed to help you protect your people and your borders. As we have done in places from Asia to Europe, we're helping you bring your economies into the global market. And as we have done in places from Asia to Europe, we have launched programs designed to help you promote economic reform and educational opportunity and political participation.

The United States has no desire for territory. We seek our shared security in your liberty. We believe that stability can only come through a free and just Middle East, where the extremists are marginalized by millions of moms and dads who want the same opportunities for their children that we have for ours. So today I would like to speak directly to the people of the Middle East.

To the Palestinian people: The dignity and sovereignty that is your right is within your reach. In President Abbas, you have a leader who understands that the path forward is through peaceful negotiations. Help him as he makes the tough decisions for peace. Oppose the extremists and terrorists who represent the greatest threat to a Palestinian state. The United States will help you build the institutions of democracy and prosperity and make your dreams of a state come true.

To the people of Israel: You know that peace and reconciliation with your neighbors is the best path to long-term security. We believe that peace is possible, though it requires tough decisions. The United States will always stand with Israel in the face of terrorism. And we will support you as you work to ensure the security of your people and bring peace and reconciliation to the Holy Land.

To the people of Iraq: You have made your choice for democracy, and you have stood firm in the face of terrible acts of murder. The terrorists and extremists cannot prevail. They are tormented by the sight of an old man voting or a young girl going to school because they know a successful democracy is a mortal threat to their ambitions. The United States is fighting side by side with Sunni and Shi'a and Kurd to root out the terrorists and extremists. We have dealt them serious blows. The United States will continue to support you as you build the institutions of a free society. And together we'll defeat our common enemies.

To the people of Iran: You are rich in culture and talent. You have a right to live under a government that listens to your wishes, respects your talents, and allows you to build better lives for your families. Unfortunately, your Government denies you these opportunities and threatens the peace and stability of your neighbors. So we call on the regime

in Tehran to heed your will and to make itself accountable to you. The day will come when the people of Iran have a Government that embraces liberty and justice and Iran joins the community of free nations. And when that good day comes, you will have no better friend than the United States of America.

To the leaders across the Middle East who are fighting the extremists: The United States will stand with you as you confront the terrorists and radicals. We urge you to join us in committing the resources to help the Palestinians build the institutions of a free society. Help the citizens of Lebanon preserve their Government and their sovereignty in the face of outside pressure from their neighbors. Show the Iraqis that you support them in their effort to build a more hopeful nation. And as you do these things, the best way to defeat the extremists in your midst is by opening your societies and trusting in your people and giving them a voice in their nation.

And finally, to the people of the Middle East: We hear your cries for justice. We share your desire for a free and prosperous future. And as you struggle to find your voice and make your way in this world, the United States will stand with you.

For most of the world, there's no greater symbol of America than the Statue of Liberty. It was designed by a man who traveled widely in this part of the world and who had originally envisioned his woman bearing a torch as standing over the Suez Canal. Ultimately, of course, it was erected in New York Harbor, where it has been an inspiration to generations of immigrants. One of these immigrants was a poet/writer named Ameen Rihani. Gazing at her lamp held high, he wondered whether her sister might be erected in the lands of his Arab forefathers. Here is how he put it: "When will you turn your face toward the East, oh Liberty?"

My friends, a future of liberty stands before you. It is your right. It is your dream. And it is your destiny.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. at the Emirates Palace Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Aida Abdullah Al-Azdi, executive director, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen)

of the Palestinian Authority; Nobel Prize winner and economist Gary S. Becker; and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel.

Remarks During a Tour of an Alternative Fuel Sources Exhibit in Abu Dhabi

January 14, 2008

The President. It's amazing, isn't it? This country has gotten its wealth from the ground and is now reinvesting in alternative forms of energy, sometimes joint venturing with U.S. institutions, like MIT.

[At this point, the exhibit tour continued, and no transcript was provided. The remarks continued as follows.]

The President. It's a modern society that is using its wealth not only to educate its people but to stay on the leading edge of technological change.

And Your Highness, it's been an amazing experience for me. And I don't think most Americans understand the UAE. And I don't think most Americans understand that your education systems are modern and that you're thinking about the future in constructive ways. I appreciate the chance to learn about you.

[The exhibit tour continued, and no transcript was provided. The remarks concluded as follows.]

The President. My hope is my visit shines a spotlight on the Middle East, the opportunities to work constructively with our friends and allies, and shows people the truth about what life is like here in the UAE. This is a remarkable place. The architecture is beautiful, but the can-do spirit is amazing.

And we just heard a briefing about how they're going to construct a city based entirely upon renewable energy. It is—it will be an opportunity to see what works, what won't work, and an opportunity to share that technology with others.

And I appreciate the commitment to conservation and to the environment that the leadership has shown here. This has been a very interesting experience. I can't thank you enough for your hospitality.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:37 a.m. at the Emirates Palace Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Remarks Prior to a Discussion With Young Arab Leaders in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

January 14, 2008

The President. Thank you, sir. I'm proud to be with you. Your Highness, thank you very much. I appreciate you picking this particular location. It is a fantastic view of your—of Dubai.

First of all, just a couple of impressions—I'm most impressed with what I've seen here. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong and, equally importantly, the desire to make sure that all aspects of society are—have hope and encouragement. And I appreciate your leadership, Your Highness.

And I want to thank you, sir, for having me. I'm looking forward to talking to the young leaders from around the region. I will answer your questions. And I also want you to understand something about America: that we respect you; we respect your religion; and we want to work together for the sake of freedom and peace.

And I thank—I'm particularly pleased to know that you have set up interchanges with some of the young in my country. You'll find them to be compassionate, decent people who share the same goals and dreams. And so I want to thank you for coming.

Your Highness, I'm so honored by your hospitality.

Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid al-Maktum. Thank you, sir. It is our pleasure to have you.

The President. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. at the Burj Al Arab Hotel.

Proclamation 8215—Religious Freedom Day, 2008

January 14, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Thomas Jefferson counted the freedom of worship as one of America's greatest blessings. He said it was "a liberty deemed in other countries incompatible with good government, and yet proved by our experience to be its best support." On Religious Freedom Day, we celebrate the 1786 passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.

The freedom to worship according to one's conscience is one of our Nation's most cherished values. It is the first protection offered in the Bill of Rights: that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." In America, people of different faiths can live together united in peace, tolerance, and humility. We are committed to the proposition that as equal citizens of the United States of America, all are free to worship as they choose.

In an era during which an unprecedented number of nations have embraced individual freedom, we have also witnessed the stubborn endurance of religious repression. Religious freedom belongs not to any one nation, but to the world, and my Administration continues to support freedom of worship at home and abroad. On Religious Freedom Day and throughout the year, we recognize the importance of religious freedom and the vital role it plays in spreading liberty and ensuring human dignity.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 16, 2008, as Religious Freedom Day. I call on all Americans to reflect on the great blessing of religious liberty, endeavor to preserve this freedom for future generations, and commemorate this day with appropriate events and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of January, in

the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., January 16, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on January 17.

Interview With Journalists in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

January 15, 2008

Press Secretary Dana Perino. We'll start on the record, just some general comments and answer a couple of questions. And then if you feel like you want to go off the record, then we'll ask them to turn their tape recorders off.

The President. Okay, I'd like to go off the record. [*Laughter*]

Q. Give us a couple. [*Laughter*]

The President. We'll start with the older people first. [*Laughter*]

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice/Iraq

Q. Well, one of the things that we were all interested in is Secretary Rice going to Iraq. When did you decide about that, and what's that all about?

The President. Decided when it looked like that there was serious momentum on the legislative front, that she could help push the momentum by her very presence. So I can't remember the exact moment; I would say it was maybe 10 days ago or something like that, when we were getting word that their budget moving, the deBa'ath law was on its—it had gone through two readings, I think, before the holidays. So it seemed to make sense that she go sit down with the—and the Presidency Council happened to meet yesterday, which was good. So she's going to go and sit down with the leaders and encourage them to continue making progress.

Q. But not you—you decided it wasn't right for you to go.

The President. Yes. Yes, I decided it was best for Condi to go. I'm not going.

By the way, I talk to the Prime Minister quite frequently on secure SVTS, which is

a real-time feed from our Embassy in Baghdad to the Situation Room in the White House. And we meet biweekly. I meet with Ryan Crocker and David—General Petraeus weekly, and it's like a meeting.

Q. So she's just in and out? This is real quick?

The President. Yes, she'll be back this evening; probably hold a press conference here this evening. The Saudis want to have a press conference with the Foreign Minister and Condi. Yes, it's just a quick trip.

Press Secretary Perino. Timing and location are still being worked out.

The President. Time and location because, you know, you don't want to set the time and have her not be back for it. But her intention is to get back here for dinner at the King's ranch.

Q. What time—

The President. She left this morning at 6:40 a.m.—or left the facility here at 6:40 a.m. And I presume it's, like, on the news, right?

Q. Yes.

The President. I haven't seen the news.

Q. It's been reported.

Q. So is it basically to promote—

The President. It's to, first of all, be there. And secondly is to—there's a momentum; there's a political process that has been working that is—with some of those laws coming to fruition. Her job is to be there, sitting down with them, explaining how much we appreciate what they've done, how they need to do more and keep moving the process.

Progress in Iraq

Q. You know, we've been talking about these benchmarks for so long. Do you really feel like maybe now it's starting to turn a corner a bit, or is that too early to say?

The President. First of all, I think—we've been talking about the benchmarks for how long? When you say "so long"—

Q. Almost a year now, isn't it?

The President. Yes, I think that's right; it has been almost a year. A political system evolves and grows. It grows when people have confidence. It grows when the grass-roots begins to agitate for change. It grows

when there's alternatives. There's competition emerging. Those are all the forces necessary to bring people together to get things done. And the leadership is more confident. The grassroots is more involved. There's been more reconciliation taking place at the local level. And the Government is beginning to respond.

This is—we assume that democracy is a natural phenomenon for people out there. These are people that lived under tyranny. They lived in a society that was divided by a dictator. And they're beginning to form the habits of self-government, manifested in laws being passed. I'm not going to predict, Steven Lee [Steven Lee Myers, New York Times], about moving this forward. I can only assure you that we will continue to work the process as hard as we can.

I reminded everybody last year, you know, people did focus on the benchmarks, and so do I. But I also reminded everybody last year that one way to determine whether or not a government is functioning is to look at their budgeting process and how they distribute revenues from central Government out to the Provinces, which is a key component of a federalized type system. And the definition of federalism, by the way, has yet to be clearly defined in Iraq, and that's part of the issues they're working through. But it's a proper role between the state government—central Government and the Provinces, and that's another piece of legislation that is part of the benchmark process.

But nevertheless, even though they haven't passed that, there is revenue sharing. In other words, there is a process. There's a way to allocate revenues. Do they have an oil law yet? No. Are they sharing oil revenues that would be inherent under an oil law? Yes, they are.

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

Q. Sir.

The President. Yes, Holly [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News].

Q. Thank you.

The President. I knew you were anxious to ask because you're waving your hand. Look, this is not like the White House press conferences.

Q. I never know when you're going to be shuffled out before I get a chance. [Laughter] It's been a long day. [Laughter]

The President. Atta girl. Stand your ground, whatever you do. [Laughter]

Q. I just wanted to ask you if you could just clarify a little bit your statement this morning to OPEC. What specific action would you like them to take at their first meeting coming up February?

The President. I would like for them to realize that high energy prices affect the economies of consuming nations, and that if these economies weaken, those economies will eventually be buying fewer barrels of oil. And having said that, there is not a lot of excess capacity in the marketplace. What's happened is, is that demand for energy has outstripped new supply. And that's why there's high price. And I fully understand how it affects the U.S. consumer. And my point to His Majesty is going to be, when consumers have less purchasing power because of high prices of gasoline—in other words, when it affects their families—it could cause this economy to slow down. If the economy slows down, there will be less barrels of oil purchased.

Now in our case, just so the American people know, most of our oil comes from Canada and Mexico. But oil is a market; it's globalized; it's fungible. That's what I meant.

Q. —brought it up with King Abdallah already?

The President. Excuse me?

Q. Did you bring it up already?

The President. No, I have not. I brought it up with members of his administration and will do so with him tonight on the farm.

President's Visit to Saudi Arabia/Iran

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your discussions with him so far and whether you've had a meeting of minds on any issues, whether it's Iran, Iraq—

The President. I appreciate that. He is most interested in two subjects, right off the bat: first, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. I think what he really wanted to determine was how—when I said, “optimistic about a state being defined,” why. So he's interested in the meetings, interested in the

behind-the-scenes observations that I was able to share with him.

He is—part of my mission was to make it clear that one reason why the talks failed in the past is that there wasn't participation by the neighbors. And I thanked him, in front of the people assembled there, for sending his Foreign Minister to Annapolis, because the presence of Saudi at Annapolis inspired the Palestinians as well as sent a message to the Israelis—Israeli population, for example.

We did spend time on Iran. The interesting issue on Iran is the effect of the NIE. And I went over the NIE with him.

[At this point, the interview continued and no transcript was provided. The transcript continued as follows.]

The President. I assured him that our intelligence services came to an independent judgment. I reminded him of what I said at my press conference when we got involved with that story: They were a threat; they are a threat; and they will be a threat if we don't work together to stop their enrichment. So we spent a fair amount of time on Iran. I have spent a fair amount of time on Iran in every stop.

It is not the only subject. There's probably more interest in my discussions on the Middle Eastern peace. Many of the leaders in the region—many of the people I have spoken to equate troubled times with no peace between the Palestinian and Israelis. It's the subject matter that—if you follow this subject, you know that this is on a lot of people's minds.

And so they were—they wanted to make sure that the efforts by the United States were real and how we conducted our policy wise. It's interesting; they weren't all that interested in, okay, give me the negotiating points, or, where are you, or, what are the talking points on both sides, or, where are we in the negotiations. They're interested in commitment and vision.

I would like to share a universal concern I've heard on this trip, and that is, the United States will not welcome foreign capital or does not welcome foreign capital. I heard it from entrepreneurs; I've heard it from government leaders. They are concerned about reinvestment of dollars back into the United

States. There's a genuine concern about protectionism. And there's—our visa policy concerns the leaders because they know full well that the best way—these are pro-American leaders, and they know the best way to defeat some perceptions that may exist on the street is for their people to go see America first-hand, like colleges and business travel. And our visa policy is getting better in some fronts, but we've still got some work to do.

So I came away with the distinct impression about a concern by government and citizen alike that the United States says, "not welcome." And that troubles me because that's not the way our country is.

National Intelligence Estimate

Q. Just a couple quick followups on Iran. On the NIE, did you—were you, in effect, distancing yourself from the conclusions of the NIE, and these guys—

The President. No, I was making it clear it was an independent judgment, because what they basically came to the conclusion of, is that he's trying—you know, this is a way to make sure that all options aren't on the table. So I defended our intelligence services, but made it clear that they're an independent Agency, that they come to conclusions separate from what I may or may not want.

Iran

Q. And on the issue of Iran, did the question of a possible military strike either by the United States or Israel come up?

The President. I just made it clear that all options are on the table. But I'd like to solve this diplomatically—and think we can—and talked about making sure consistent messages emanated from all parts of the world to the Iranians.

Strait of Hormuz Naval Incident

Q. Related to that, this confrontation in the Straits with the Iranian gunboats—are the rules of engagement going to change on that? You've warned of serious consequences if they do it again.

The President. I did. I said, if they destroy our ships, yes. If they destroy our ships, there will be serious consequences.

Q. Yes, but I'm saying, if they—

The President. I didn't say, if they do it again—if they do it again—I don't know. What do you mean, "if they do it again?"

Q. Well, if they approach the ships and would there—

The President. Well, there is clear rules of engagement. Our captains—I was briefed by the admiral in Bahrain about the rules of engagement. But please don't confuse hitting our ships with explosives or attacking our ships and serious—

Q. Okay, I won't. But I just was wondering whether the next time something like that is attempted by one of these Iranian boats, they might be fired on.

The President. I don't know. It's going to be up to the captain to determine whether or not his vessel is in jeopardy. My only point is, they shouldn't be doing it. It was provocative in the first place, and our captain showed restraint. These are judgment calls, and there are clear rules of engagement. Our people operate under very strict rules in the Straits, and so should the Iranians. And they better be careful of—and not be provocative and, you know, get out there and cause an incident, because there's going to be serious consequences. And what I said in my statement was, if they hit one of our ships, there are going to be serious consequences, and I meant it.

Q. Do you have any sense of what they were up to? What motive—

The President. I don't know.

Q. Were they test—

The President. I don't know.

Q. Do you think they were playing some sort of game?

The President. I don't know. I don't know. I was briefed—I spent some time in Bahrain with—you know, when I went over there for the breakfast with the troops, command briefed us, our security team, on what are the rules of engagement, you know, and how do they work, how does it react. This is one of these moments where there's no time to be spending a lot time on the phone trying to figure out what to do. And there's—these are highly trained professionals who I thought dealt with it in a very professional way.

Q. Sir, are you sure of whether or not this was actually directed out of Tehran, the

President's office, or whether it's some separate—

The President. It could be. IRGC or—versus the military—but you know something? It's not going to matter to me one way or the other if they hit our ships, and the Iranian Government has got to understand that. This is serious business. We lost lives when one of those boats loaded with explosives attacked us—called the USS *Cole*. In this case, it would be states—it would be the actions of a state. And so my message was clear to the Iranian Government: Whoever made the—is in control of these boats best be careful.

Q. You were suggesting that this could be—could have been directed by the Revolutionary Guard.

The President. No, I'm not. His question was, do we know the chain of command? There's several chains of command inside the—it was a very perceptive comment by the lad, and it was—there are separate military organizations, separate organizations inside Iran, and so we don't know.

Q. The IRGC, was that the—

The President. The IRGC could be—is a player inside Iran. I don't know. Do not write the story that I'm predicting who made this decision, because I'm telling you—I can't be any more plain about it—I don't know. I do know it was a provocative incident.

And my other was, it's not going to matter who made the decision. If they hit our ships, we will hold Iran responsible.

Q. Okay. Can we ask you on—

The President. You can ask me anything you want. If I don't want to answer, I'll say, I don't want to answer it. [Laughter] I'm feeling quite feisty here, Steven Lee. [Laughter]

Q. You are? Are you in a good mood?

The President. Yes, a great mood.

Q. I do.

The President. Dates put you in a good mood, right? I'm in a great mood.

Q. Which kind of dates are you talking about? [Laughter]

The President. Not bad. Not bad. [Laughter] Pretty good. A wordsmith. [Laughter] All right, go ahead.

Iran

Q. In your discussions with King Abdallah and other Gulf Arab leaders, were they in any way urging restraint? There's been some concern—

The President. What?

Q. Were they in any way urging you restraint in your dealings with Iran?

The President. I told them that I want to solve this issue diplomatically. My position has not altered. I explained to them the diplomacy we're going through. They need to help. They need to make it clear to nations that do business with Iran that if we want to solve this diplomatically, there needs to be pressure on the regime so that some—the hope is, is that somebody shows up and says, "We're tired of being isolated, and we're tired of the economic deprivation that comes from our desire to enrich."

I also explained to them why I support the Russian position. And for those of you who follow the White House and have listened carefully to what I've been saying, know full well that's been my position for quite a while. Because I said early on that I supported the Iranian desire for—they said, every sovereign nation has the right for a civilian nuclear power. I said, you're right. I said, the problem with you is, you haven't honored the international agreements—"you" being the Iranians. And secondly—therefore, we can't trust you with enrichment.

But because I believe that you have a sovereign right for nuclear power, I support the Russian idea of providing you with enriched uranium and collecting the spent uranium, thereby undermining their position that they need to learn to enrich in order to have civilian nuclear power. And the danger with enrichment for civilian—so-called civilian purposes is, is that that technology can be transferred easily to another covert military program. Knowledge is transferable, and so what I've explained to our friends in the region is the best way to stop any potential weapons program is—

[There was an interruption to the discussion, and the remarks continued as follows.]

The President. I'm not starting over. I'm not starting over. *[Laughter]*

Q. That's all right; you don't have to.

The President. Good, yes. Anyway—is to start a weapons program—to stop a weapons program is to stop their ability to enrich. I've also explained to them our position is, is that if they verifiably suspend their program, there is a way forward for dialog through the P-3 process. What do you call—what do we call that? The group of five—

Press Secretary Perino. The P-5-plus-1.

The President. The P-5-plus-1 process.

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Are you hogging this?

Q. Yes. *[Laughter]*

The President. I'm teasing. Go ahead.

Israel/Iran

Q. Just one quick followup on Iran, just because it comes up—I mean, this issue of what Israel will do has been out there ever since Vice President Cheney raised it with Don Imus in the very beginning of your second term, about the Israelis having a—

The President. I don't remember that. What did he say?

Q. Oh, he said there was concern about what the Israelis might do. And particularly in the weeks since the NIE, there has been murmuring in Israel—Israeli defense circles. One of your own former officials, Bruce Riedel, told me a few weeks ago—

The President. Who?

Q. Bruce Riedel—he used to work on the NSC—said that he came back from a visit to Iran—

[The interview continued and no transcript was provided. The transcript continued as follows.]

Press Secretary Perino. I would recommend—you have about 10 more minutes.

National Economy

Q. Can we ask you about—let's go back on the economy. You talked about the threat of the economy slowing down if consumers buy less oil, or can—

The President. The price of energy can have an effect on economic growth. I was talking about—they were asking me about what I'm going to say to King Abdallah. And I'm going to say, high energy prices can affect economic growth because it's painful for our consumers.

Q. My question is, you've talked about inheriting a recession when you came into office. You're a year away from leaving office. Do you think that your successor is going to wind up in the same boat?

The President. I've always said these are times of economic uncertainty, but I have confidence in the future—immediate future because the underpinnings of our economy are good. Inflation—core inflation is low. We've still got some—and employment has been strong. We've still got some issues, obviously, and one of them is the housing market. That's one of the things the leaders have been interested in, is my views on the economy.

Q. But, sir, since—

Q. It's the "R" word.

The President. No, I'm optimistic, as I said. My position hasn't changed from 3 days ago, or whatever it was, when I commented on this.

Q. The fact that you're optimistic, that suggests—does that mean that you are not going to suggest any change in your tax policy or—

The President. Look, I'm going to watch very carefully. And we'll let you know if I decide one way or the other.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about what you're hearing from Arab leaders—

The President. Sorry, Mike [Mike Emanuel, FOX News], I've already answered that. Next. [Laughter] No, I'm teasing.

Q. I'm used to it.

The President. He actually was a Texas reporter.

Q. About the Palestinian-Israeli issue, what kind of feedback are you hearing?

Press Secretary Perino. We did cover that before you—

The President. I'll be glad to tell you again. The first question in their mind is, one, why do I sound optimistic? Two, are we going to spend the time and effort to help move the process? I made it clear to them that in order for this to work, they've got to be supportive of the Palestinians and make it clear that Israel is an important part of the future of the Middle East.

Q. Do the Arab States recognize Israel? I mean, do they want to—have they shown any sign that they want to improve relations with Israel?

The President. I think the fact that they sent major players in their administration to Annapolis was a sign—that answers your question. And they want to see a deal done, and they want progress because the issue frustrates them. As I said earlier, Michael, this issue is kind of the touchstone in their mind for a lot of other problems in the Middle East; you solve this, then a lot of other problems go away. I hope they're right on that. But this is, no question, a very important issue, and it's one that—go ahead. I'll be glad to go off the record and tell you why now.

Q. Sir, if I could just follow on that point. I noted that the King of Bahrain mentioned the peace process in his statement when he welcomed you. We haven't heard similar statements. I understand that they sent their representatives. Do you think that many of the Arab leaders are still holding back a little bit; they want to see, perhaps, a little more progress towards a deal before they're willing to come out and start talking about things like recognition of Israel?

The President. That's an interesting question. First of all, after years of disappointment, those of us directly involved in the process have a lot of work to try to instill confidence in the people. And I think laying back is too strong a word, but I think wondering whether this can happen is the right way to put it, Steven Lee.

They definitely want it to happen. They're willing to send a—in the Saudis' case, their Foreign Minister to Annapolis. They are most interested—we spent a lot of time on this subject in each stop because they're most interested in getting my point of view about how I think the process is going to unfold, what are the problems, what can the U.S. do to help, and will we be actively involved. They have this great hope that the United States involvement will cause the process to be more likely to move forward.

Q. I want to apologize for our tardiness.

The President. It's my fault—roadblocks.

Q. If you covered this, I apologize for that too.

The President. Which reminds me of the question—did you get what I mouthed to you there?

Q. I did.

The President. It was—I thought it was a really interesting question.

President's Visit to Saudi Arabia/Oil Supply

Q. What do you hope to get out of the King, or what do you hope to accomplish with this talk about our economy and the impact of high prices?

The President. Well, first of all is a realization that high energy prices can damage consuming economies. It can hurt the economy. And it hasn't—it's been—it's affected our families. Don't get me wrong; paying more for gasoline hurts some of the American families. And I'll make that clear to him. But I also understand the dynamics behind the issue, and that is growing demand from U.S., but more particularly, China and India relative to supply.

Oil is a commodity; it isn't something you just turn a tap. I mean, it requires investment, exploration, a lot of capital. I talked to His Majesty early on in my Presidency in the hopes that they would explore for new fields; they have. They've increased their capacity. But in the meantime, demand has gone up quite substantially.

Oil Prices

Q. Well, do you want him to open the spigot more? Do you want him to lower the prices?

The President. Well, that's the question: What does that mean? That's what—I hope that OPEC, if possible, understands that if they could put more supply on the market, it would be helpful. But a lot of these economies are going—a lot of these oil-producing countries are full out.

Press Secretary Perino. We have time for one more on-the-record question. And we will get the transcript to you, Peter [Peter Maer, CBS Radio] and Mike, as soon as possible.

The President. I hope I answered the second way the same way I did the first way.

Q. I'll just ask—[laughter].

Middle East Peace Process

Q. I would follow up on that—the security barrier—what I was trying to get out of my question was the notion that if—

The President. You didn't think of it until I said, "nice question."

Q. No, no, no.

The President. You were coming with this?

Q. I wanted to ask, but the mike went down, remember. And so I didn't get a followup.

The President. I wasn't going to give you a followup in front of the cameras anyway.

Q. Fair enough. The question I had is, do you see a day someday when some President in the future will come and say to some Israeli leader and Palestinian leader that it's time for that wall to come down, not unlike Ronald Reagan's—

The President. You know, I don't think in the short term that day will come. I do think there will be a day—your question was not the wall; your question was checkpoints, which I guess is the wall.

Q. I meant barrier, is what I meant, the barrier you drove through—

The President. Well, barrier—this is not barriers.

Q. It's the same question, really.

The President. Well, no, it's not, in all due respect to the questioner. It was your question; of course, it's the same question. [Laughter]

Q. What I meant to say was—[laughter].

The President. Yes, exactly. [Laughter]

Look, first of all, the state comes into being subject to the roadmap, which requires security measures being in place so that the Israeli population is comfortable that it's not going to have a state that harbors people that want to destroy them. The reason why you articulate a vision is to give people inside the Palestinian Territories who don't want violence and who don't want to destroy Israel a chance to be for something. This is how I answered the question.

The wall is a—was necessary, in the Israelis' minds, to protect themselves. It is that sense of security which I hope will give them a chance—their politicians a chance to negotiate the deal. The deal becomes more

security. In other words, it's a series of security measures that will eventually cause a state to come into being. And whether or not the wall comes down or not, I can't predict that to you, Steven Lee. I can tell you, though, there's no such thing as a state if it's going to be occupied. In other words, when I said contiguous, that means contiguous territory that does not—Swiss cheese, that it's—and I thought that's actually what you were referring to with those interior roadblocks.

Q. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:16 p.m. at Nasiriya Guest Palace. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Minister of Foreign Affairs Saud al-Faysal bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; Vice Adm. Kevin J. Cosgriff, USN, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet, and Combined Maritime Forces; and Capt. Jeffery James, USN, commanding officer, USS *Hopper*. A reporter referred to radio personality Don Imus; and King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Prior to a Discussion With Saudi Entrepreneurs in Riyadh

January 15, 2008

I'm George W. Bush, President of the United States. [*Laughter*] Thank you all for joining us. Ambassador, thanks for setting this up. It's important for the President to hear thoughts, hopes, dreams, aspirations, concerns from folks that are out making a living. And I really appreciate you taking time out of your day to come and visit with me. I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

One thing is for certain: The United States benefits when people come to my country. And one of my concerns was, after September the 11th, that our visa policy, particularly for Saudis, was tightened to the point where we missed opportunity to show young and old alike what our country is really about. I love the fact that some of you were educated in America. I think you'll find you got a good education there, but more impor-

tantly, Americans get to see you, and you get to see them. And the best way to achieve better understanding in the world is for folks just to get together and get to understand that we share the same God; we share the same aspirations for children and for our futures.

And so this is an important visit for me. I'm thrilled to be in the Kingdom. I have—I've got very close relations with His Majesty. We had a good visit last night on a variety of subjects. We talked about Palestinian peace; we talked about the security issues of the region. I talked to the Ambassador and will again talk to His Majesty tonight about the fact that oil prices are very high, which is tough on our economy, and that I would hope, as OPEC considers different production levels, that they understand that if their—one of their biggest consumers' economy suffers, it will mean less purchases, less oil and gas sold.

And so we've got a lot of things to talk about, but I want to assure you it's from the spirit of friendship. And the hospitality last night was warm and the conversation was excellent, just like this one is going to be.

So I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:51 p.m. at the U.S. Embassy. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ford M. Fraker; and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

Memorandum on Presidential Exemption from the Coastal Zone Management Act

January 15, 2008

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Commerce

Subject: Presidential Exemption from the Coastal Zone Management Act

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 1456(c)(1)(B) of title 16, United States Code, and to ensure effective and timely training

of the United States naval forces in anti-submarine warfare using mid-frequency active sonar:

I hereby exempt from compliance with the requirements of section 1456(c)(1)(A) of title 16 (section 307(c)(1)(A) of the Coastal Zone Management Act) those elements of the Department of the Navy's anti-submarine warfare training during Southern California Operating Area Composite Training Unit Exercises (COMPTUEX) and Joint Task Force Exercises (JTFEX) involving the use of mid-frequency active sonar. These exercises are more fully described in the Environmental Assessment/Overseas Environmental Assessment prepared for the Commander, United States Pacific Fleet, dated February 2007.

On January 3, 2008, as modified on January 10, 2008, the United States District Court for the Central District of California determined that the Navy's use of mid-frequency active sonar was not in compliance with section 1456(c)(1)(A), and issued an order that is appealable under section 1291 or 1292 of title 28, United States Code. On January 11, 2008, the Secretary of Commerce made a written request that the Navy be exempted from compliance with section 1456(c)(1)(A) in its use of mid-frequency active sonar during COMPTUEX and JTFEX. As part of that request, the Secretary of Commerce certified that mediation under section 1456(h) is not likely to result in the Navy's compliance with section 1456(c)(1)(A).

I hereby determine that the COMPTUEX and JTFEX, including the use of mid-frequency active sonar in these exercises, are in the paramount interest of the United States. Compliance with section 1456(c)(1)(A) would undermine the Navy's ability to conduct realistic training exercises that are necessary to ensure the combat effectiveness of carrier and expeditionary strike groups. This exemption will enable the Navy to train effectively and to certify carrier and expeditionary strike groups for deployment in support of world-wide operational and combat activities, which are essential to national security.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 16.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt
January 16, 2008

President Mubarak. I'd like to welcome President Bush here in Egypt and, particularly, in Sharm el-Sheikh City. It is the City of Peace.

We briefed Mr. Bush—he briefed us on the outcome of his visits in the region, and we had very important consultations, which dealt with the security situation now and bilateral and mutual efforts for the sake of peace, security, and stability in the Middle East.

I emphasized through our consultations the Egyptian situation, underscoring and supporting peace and our aspirations that Mr. Bush follows up the negotiations between both the Israeli and Palestinian sides, and I also said that I wish to reach a peace agreement before the end of his term. I emphasized that the Palestinian question, of course, is the core of problems and conflict in the Middle East, and it is the entry to contain the crises and tension in the region and the best means to face what's going on in the world and our region—I mean by that, the escalation of violence, extremism, and terrorism.

I also underscored the strategic importance we focus on here in Egypt, that the Gulf—its peoples, sisterly peoples and states, they are part and parcel of the national security of Egypt, the security of the Middle East, and the world. The Egyptian-American relations actually have been very important, and this importance has been getting more important. And this importance addressed the interests of both people in all the region and issues in the Middle East.

Our consultations today showed that we believe and understand the mutual interests of both sides in continuing our dialog and consultations—and I mean by that, strategic consultations—for the sake of the peace, security, and stability of the Middle East and the development of its states and the prosperity of its people. I also emphasized that we in Egypt, we are keen on supporting peace efforts; that we're ready, hand in hand with the United States of America and the

Quartet and all other regional and international stakeholders of parties, for the sake of comprehensive and just peace, to put an end to this Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, finally, to open new horizons for the Middle East, for a more peaceful and security future—more justice and security in the region.

I reiterate our welcome words for Mr. Bush, and I hope that his efforts in the sake of peace would reach a success. And I'll give you the floor, sir.

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you, sir. It's a pleasure to be back in Egypt. This is such a beautiful sight, Mr. President. Thank you for hosting my visit here. As you mentioned, I've been on a long trip, and I can't think of a better place to end it than right here with you in this beautiful setting.

President Mubarak. But needs much more days.

President Bush. Yes. He wants me back, okay. [Laughter] He's extended an invitation, and thank you for that, sir.

It's an important stop for me because the United States has a longstanding friendship with Egypt. It's important for the people of Egypt to understand, our Nation respects you, respects your history, respects your traditions, and respects your culture. Our friendship is strong. It's a cornerstone of—one of the main cornerstones of our policy in this region, and it's based on our shared commitment to peace, security, and prosperity.

I appreciate the opportunity, Mr. President, to give you an update on my trip. And I appreciate the advice you've given me. You've seen a lot in your years as President. You've got a great deal of experience, and I appreciate your feeling comfortable in sharing that experience once again with me.

I really appreciate Egypt's support in the war on terror. I appreciate the fact that you've given peacekeepers for Sudan. I did brief you on my talks in Israel and with the Palestinians, and they were positive talks. And I said, I'm optimistic an agreement can be reached. And the reason I am is because I believe the leadership in Israel and the leadership of the Palestinians is committed to a two-state solution. And I know nations in the neighborhood are willing to help, par-

ticularly yourself. And I appreciate your strong, constructive support for the process.

And I told the President, I'm going to stay—there's a wonder whether or not the American President, when he says something, whether he actually means it. When I say, "I'm coming back to stay engaged," I mean it. And when I say, "I'm optimistic we can get a deal done," I mean what I'm saying. And so I appreciate the chance to talk.

We also talked about Lebanon, and we agree it's important for nations in this region to support Prime Minister Siniora. It's important to encourage the holding of immediate and unconditional Presidential elections according to the Lebanese Constitution and to make it clear to Syria, Iran, and their allies, they must end their interference and efforts to undermine the process.

We talked—and by the way, when it came to the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, I want to thank you for your support of Annapolis. It was important that you were there. As a matter of fact, you didn't hesitate, because you knew that both those parties had to have supportive people in the region. And I thank you very much for that.

We spent time on Iraq. The President asked me how I thought things were going there. The decision to send more troops is working. Violence is down. Secretary Rice came back from Iraq yesterday and briefed me that she was able to see life returning back to the streets, where moms are out with their children. Normal life is coming back, and political life is moving.

Mr. President, I'm sure you followed the fact that the Council of Representatives passed the deBa'athification law as part of an important reconciliation package. The Government isn't perfect, but nevertheless, progress is being made. And I assured you, Mr. President—I want to share this with the press corps—that the United States will continue to help the Iraqi people secure their democracy.

I also talked about Egypt's role in the world. Egypt is an important nation that sends a clear signal. People watch Egypt. I appreciate very much the long and proud tradition that you've had for a vibrant civil society. I appreciate the fact that women play

an important role in your society, Mr. President. I do so because not only am I'm a proud father of two young professional women; I also know how important it is for any vibrant society to have women involved in constructive and powerful ways. And I appreciate the example that your nation is setting.

Progress toward greater political openness is being led by the Egyptians themselves, by pioneering journalists—some of whom even may be here—bloggers or judges insisting on independence or other strong civic and religious leaders who love their country and are determined to build a democratic future.

Because of the predominate role you play and because I strongly believe that Egypt can play a role in the freedom and justice movement—you and I have discussed the issue; you have taken steps toward economic openness—and I discussed that with your Prime Minister—and democratic reform. And my hope is that the Egyptian Government will build on these important steps and give the people of this proud nation a greater voice in your future. I think it will lead to peace, and I think it will lead to justice.

Our friendship with Egypt is deep and broad. Egypt will continue to be a vital strategic partner of the United States. We will work together to build a safer and more peaceful world. And, Mr. President, I thank your leadership on the issue of peace and security.

I've had a great trip. I've been impressed by the warmth and the energy of the people I have met. This is a dynamic part of the world that is seeing significant changes. I wish my fellow citizens would be able to come and see firsthand the vibrancy and excitement in the Middle East. People here are working to embrace the opportunities of a modern global economy and, in doing so, are not abandoning their traditions, their cultures, or their faith.

This isn't easy work, as we head into the 21st century, and it's going to require social, economic, and political reform. And it takes time for people to resolve the challenges in their respective societies—same in my country. But I'm absolutely confident the people of the Middle East are working hard to build a society based upon justice. And I've assured

them that as they make the journey, the United States will be a steady friend and partner.

Thank you for your time. God bless.

President Mubarak. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the Royal Suite Garden at the Four Seasons Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; and Prime Minister Ahmed Mohamed Nazif of Egypt. President Mubarak spoke partly in Arabic, and those portions of his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Proclamation 8216—Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, 2008

January 16, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., changed our Nation forever through his leadership, service, and clarity of vision. On the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, we honor the lasting legacy of this great American, remember the ideals for which he fought, and recommit ourselves to ensuring that our country's promise extends to all Americans across this great land.

In the brief time Dr. King walked upon this earth, he devoted his life to strengthening the content of the American character and called on our Nation to live up to its founding principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all its citizens. Dr. King's faith in the Almighty gave him the courage to confront discrimination and segregation, and he preached that all the powers of evil are ultimately no match for even one individual armed with eternal truths. Through his determination, spirit, and resolve, Dr. King helped lift souls and lead one of the greatest movements for equality and freedom in history.

Our Nation has made progress toward realizing Dr. King's dream, yet the work to achieve liberty and justice for all is never-ending. In July of 2006, I was honored to sign the "Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006,"

to renew the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and reaffirm our commitment to securing the voting rights of all Americans. My Administration will continue to protect the rights won through the sacrifice of Dr. King and other civil rights leaders, and our country will never rest until equality is real, opportunity is universal, and all citizens are empowered to realize their dreams.

As we observe Dr. King's birthday, I encourage all Americans to celebrate his memory by performing acts of kindness through service to others. Let us live out Dr. King's teachings as we continue to work for the day when the dignity and humanity of every person is respected.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 21, 2008, as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday. I encourage all Americans to observe this day with appropriate civic, community, and service programs and activities in honor of Dr. King's life and legacy.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:51 a.m., January 18, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on January 22.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

January 16, 2008

Dear _____:

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-114)(the "Act"), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond February 1, 2008, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act

is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Joseph R. Biden, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Robert C. Byrd, chairman, and Thad Cochran, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Tom Lantos, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs; and David R. Obey, chairman, and Jerry Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Special Envoy for Sudan Richard S. Williamson

January 17, 2008

The President. I've just had an extensive visit with Madam Secretary and members of my national security team, Rich Williamson, who is the Presidential Envoy—Special Envoy to Sudan.

We talked about our common commitment and the commitment of this Government to help the suffering of citizens in Sudan who, you know, suffer deprivation, rape. My administration called this a genocide. Once you label it genocide, you obviously have to do something about it.

Our discussion centered upon our mutual desire to develop a strategy that will help the United Nations become more effective. The United Nations considers the Darfur issue a central issue, and it's on its agenda. And we agree. The United States can help what has been a process, frankly, that has unfolded a little too slow for our liking. And we can help.

And secondly, we want to make sure that the peace agreement negotiated through this administration by Ambassador Danforth, between the north and south, holds. So Rich is going to report back to me quickly. You know, I plan to accelerate our efforts.

You know, America is probably wondering why, why do you care? And one reason we care about the suffering in Sudan is because we care about the human condition all across

the face of the Earth. And we fully understand that when people suffer, it is in our interest to help. And we also understand that when people suffer, it makes it more likely that some may turn to the ideology of those who use murder as a weapon. So it's in our national security interest and it's in our—in the interest of our conscience to confront this, what we have called a genocide. And I want to thank you for taking this on.

Ambassador Williamson. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. It's a big deal; you've got my full support.

Ambassador Williamson. I appreciate it. Thank you, sir.

The President. Yes, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:56 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John C. Danforth.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Request for Additional Funds for Veterans Resources

January 17, 2008

Dear Madam Speaker:

My Administration is committed to providing the resources needed to ensure that veterans, including those returning from current combat operations, receive the quality care and services they deserve.

In the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Public Law 110–161, \$3,691,391,000 was designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement contingent upon a formal budget request by me that includes designation of the entire amount as an emergency requirement. While I believe that these funds should have been considered as regular appropriations, the men and women who have sacrificed for our country should not be held hostage to budgetary wrangling in Washington. Therefore, to provide these funds in a timely manner I hereby request and designate as an emergency requirement the \$3,691,391,000, consistent with Public Law 110–161.

Additional information on this action is set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Remarks on the National Economy

January 18, 2008

Over the past several months, I've held a series of meetings with my economic team on the outlook for the U.S. economy. And before I left for the Middle East, I directed them to conduct a thorough assessment of our economic condition, consult with Members of Congress, and provide me with their recommendations about any actions we might need to take.

The economic team reports that our economy has a solid foundation, but that there are areas of real concern. Our economy is still creating jobs, though at a reduced pace. Consumer spending is still growing, but the housing market is declining. Business investment and exports are still rising, but the cost of imported oil has increased.

My administration has been watching our economy carefully. My advisers and many outside experts expect that our economy will continue to grow over the coming year, but at a slower rate than we have enjoyed for the past few years. And there is a risk of a downturn. Continued instability in the housing and financial markets could cause additional harm to our overall economy and put our growth and job creation in jeopardy.

In recent months, we've taken steps to shore up the housing market, including measures to help struggling homeowners avoid foreclosure and to keep their homes. I've also—have asked Congress to pass legislation to modernize the Federal Housing Administration and enable it to provide additional assistance to struggling homeowners. The House passed a bill, and the Senate passed a bill, and now they need to get together and get a bill to my desk as quickly as possible.

After careful consideration and after discussions with Members of the Congress, I have concluded that additional action is needed. To keep our economy growing and

creating jobs, Congress and the administration need to work to enact an economic growth package as soon as possible.

As Congress considers such a plan, there are certain principles that must guide its deliberations. This growth package must be big enough to make a difference in an economy as large and dynamic as ours, which means it should be about 1 percent of GDP. This growth package must be built on broad-based tax relief that will directly affect economic growth and not the kind of spending projects that would have little immediate impact on our economy. This growth package must be temporary and take effect right away so we can get help to our economy when it needs it most. And this growth package must not include any tax increases.

Specifically, this growth package should bolster both business investment and consumer spending, which are critical to economic growth. And this would require two key provisions. To be effective, a growth package must include tax incentive for American businesses, including small businesses, to make major investments in their enterprises this year. Giving them an incentive to invest now will encourage businessowners to expand their operations, create new jobs, and inject new energy into our economy in the process.

To be effective, a growth package must also include direct and rapid income tax relief for the American people. Americans could use this money as they see fit—to help meet their monthly bills, cover higher costs at the gas pump, or pay for other basic necessities. Letting Americans keep more of their own money should increase consumer spending and lift our economy at a time when people otherwise might spend less.

Yesterday I spoke to members of the congressional leadership from both political parties. They shared with me their thoughts on the best way forward. And I was encouraged by those discussions, and I believe there is enough broad consensus that we can come up with a package that can be approved with bipartisan support. I've asked Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson to lead my administration's efforts to forge an agreement with Congress, so that we can deliver this needed boost to our economy as quickly as possible.

Passing a new growth package is our most pressing economic priority. When that is done, Congress must turn to the most important economic priority for our country, and that's making sure the tax relief that is now in place is not taken away. A source of uncertainty in our economy is that this tax relief is set to expire at the end of 2010. Unless Congress acts, the American people will face massive tax increases in less than 3 years. The marriage penalty will make a comeback; the child tax credit will be cut in half; the death tax will come back to life; and tax rates will go up on regular income, capital gains, and dividends. This tax increase would put jobs and economic growth at risk, and Congress has a responsibility to keep that from happening. So it's critical that Congress make this tax relief permanent.

We're in the midst of a challenging period, and I know that Americans are concerned about their economic future. But our economy has seen challenging times before, and it is resilient.

In a vibrant economy, markets rise and decline. We cannot change that fundamental dynamic. As a matter of fact, eliminating risk altogether would also eliminate the innovation and productivity that drives the creations of jobs and wealth in America. Yet there are also times when swift and temporary actions can help ensure that inevitable market adjustments do not undermine the health of the broader economy. This is such a moment.

By passing an effective growth package quickly, we can provide a shot in the arm to keep a fundamentally strong economy healthy. And it will help keep economic sectors that are going through adjustments, such as the housing market, from adversely affecting other parts of our economy.

I'm optimistic about our economic future because Americans have shown time and again that they are the most industrious, creative, and enterprising people in the world. That is what has made our economy strong, and that is what will make it stronger in the challenging times ahead.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Tour of Wright Manufacturing, Inc., in Frederick, Maryland

January 18, 2008

The President. Let me tell you why I'm here. This man started his own business. He is a manufacturer; he employs over a hundred people; and he represents the backbone of the American economy. And today I talked about our economy, and the fundamentals are strong, but there's uncertainty. And there's a opportunity to work with Congress to pass a progrowth package that'll deal with the uncertainty.

Any package has got to remember that jobs are created by small businesses. A good package will have incentives for investment in it. The package we passed early in my administration helped him. He bought some equipment, made his firm more productive, kept him in business. That's the same spirit that needs to be in this next growth package.

The other thing is, is that we got to make sure that we benefit consumers. We want our consumers out there spending, and the best way to do that is through broad-based tax relief. Now, this plan ought to be broad-based, it ought to be simple, and it ought to be temporary.

I had a conversation with Congressman, with the leadership on both sides of the aisle yesterday, and I was encouraged by what I heard. And I believe we can come together on a growth package very quickly. We're going to need to. We need to get this deal done and get it out and get money in the hands of our consumers and small-business owners to help this economy.

I'm optimistic; I truly am. One reason I'm optimistic is cause I understand we got all kinds of Americans just like this man here, working hard to provide a living for folks and to make a product people want.

And so, while there's some uncertainty right now, if we act quickly and in a smart way that helps growth, we're going to be just fine.

Anyway, thanks for letting me come by. I'm proud to be—I love the entrepreneurial class in America. I love people who have a dream and work hard to achieve the dream.

And so—a fine-looking machine you got here.

Bill Wright. Thank you. It's a team effort. We thank you, thank you for all your work too.

The President. Do you wonder where they got the name "Wright?" That's his name. And his wife is the cofounder of the company. And this is—it's really great to be with you.

And, Congressman, thank you for being here. I'm proud to be with your workers. You've got some fine workers.

Mr. Wright. We've got a great team here, don't we?

The President. Yes, you do. And if they get a little more money in their pocket as a result of the growth package, it'll help make sure this economy continues to grow.

Anyway, thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Wright, president and chief executive officer, Wright Manufacturing, Inc., and his wife, Margie; and Representative Roscoe G. Bartlett of Maryland.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process

January 18, 2008

On January 23, 1995, by Executive Order 12947, the President declared a national emergency pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by grave acts of violence committed by foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process. On August 20, 1998, by Executive Order 13099, the President modified the Annex to Executive Order 12947 to identify four additional persons, including Usama bin Laden, who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process.

Because these terrorist activities continue to threaten the Middle East peace process and to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy,

and economy of the United States, the national emergency declared on January 23, 1995, as expanded on August 20, 1998, and the measures adopted on those dates to deal with that emergency must continue in effect beyond January 23, 2008. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
January 18, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:56 a.m., January 18, 2008]

NOTE: This notice will be published in the *Federal Register* on January 22.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process

January 18, 2008

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process is to continue in effect beyond January 23, 2008.

The crisis with respect to the grave acts of violence committed by foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process that led to the declaration of

a national emergency on January 23, 1995, as expanded on August 20, 1998, has not been resolved. Terrorist groups continue to engage in activities that have the purpose or effect of threatening the Middle East peace process and that are hostile to United States interests in the region. Such actions constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process and to maintain in force the economic sanctions against them to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

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.

January 12

In the morning, at Bayan Palace Guest House in Kuwait City, Kuwait, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, where, in a briefing room, he met with Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker. Later, he toured the Operations Center.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City.

In the afternoon, the President met with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families. Later, he traveled to Kuwait International Airport, where, upon arrival, he participated in a greeting with Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait. He then traveled to Manama, Bahrain, where, upon arrival at

Bahrain International Airport, he participated in a greeting with King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Sakhir Palace. Later, he traveled to the Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain Hotel, where, in the Al Noor Room, he met with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with King Abdullah II of Jordan to discuss his Middle East trip. Later, he met with King Hamad. They then had a working dinner.

January 13

In the morning, the President traveled to Naval Support Activity Bahrain, where, in the multipurpose room, he had breakfast with U.S. military personnel. Later, he traveled to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, where, at Abu Dhabi International Airport, he participated in a greeting with President Khalifa bin Zayid al-Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Al Mushref Palace, where he participated in an arrival ceremony with President Khalifa.

In the afternoon, in the Al Etihad Majlis of Al Mushref Palace, the President met with President Khalifa. Then, in the Dining Room, they had lunch. Later, he traveled to the Emirates Palace Hotel.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the Falcon Farm of the Desert Encampment, where he had dinner with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

In the evening, the President returned to the Emirates Palace Hotel.

January 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then participated in an interview with Greta Van Susteren of FOX News. Later, in the ballroom of the Emirates Palace Hotel, he met with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where, upon arrival at Dubai International Airport, he participated in a greeting with Vice President and Prime Minister Muhammad bin

Rashid al-Maktum of the United Arab Emirates. He then toured the Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum House.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding, where he had lunch with Dubai School of Government students. He then traveled to the Burj Al Arab Hotel. Later, he returned to Dubai International Airport, where, in the Royal Airwing, he met with U.S. Embassy personnel and their families.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with President-elect Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia to congratulate him on his election victory. Upon arrival at King Khaled International Airport, he participated in an arrival ceremony with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. He then traveled to Nasiriya Guest Palace.

In the evening, the President traveled to Riyadh Palace, where he had dinner and met with King Abdallah. Later, he returned to Nasiriya Guest Palace.

January 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to the U.S. Embassy Riyadh where, in the lobby, he met with Embassy personnel and their families. He then visited Al Murabba Palace and National History Museum.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Nasiriya Guest Palace.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Al Janadriyah Farm in Al Janadriyah, Saudi Arabia. Upon arrival, he participated in a photo opportunity with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. They then toured the farm.

In the evening, the President had dinner and met with King Abdallah.

January 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a traditional breakfast with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. He then returned to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to the Four Seasons Resort in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. Later, he traveled to Sharm el-Sheikh International Airport, where he participated in a greeting with President Mubarak. He then returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

January 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr., had a conference call with congressional leaders. Later, in the East Room, he met with Republican National Committee members.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nelson M. Ford to be Under Secretary of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joxel Garcia to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service and Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services (Health).

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey J. Grieco to be Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (Legislative and Public Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Board of Directors of the National Board of Education Sciences: Jonathan Baron; Frank Philip Handy; Sally Epstein Shaywitz; and Joanne Weiss.

The President announced his intention to appoint H.H. Barlow, William DeLauder, and Keith W. Eckel as members of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robert A. Easter as Chairman of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development.

The President announced his intention to appoint John M. Townsend as a member of the Panel of Arbitrators of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

January 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Frederick, MD. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, former Prime Minister Yevgeniy Maksimovich Primakov of Russia, and senior American and Russian statesmen and policy experts to discuss Russia-U.S. relations.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to Tbilisi, Georgia, to attend the inauguration of Mikheil Saakashvili as President of Georgia on January 20: Carlos M. Gutierrez (head of delegation); and John F. Tefft.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to Auckland, New Zealand, to attend the state funeral of Sir Edmund Hillary on January 22: Mary A. Bomar (head of delegation); William P. McCormick; and Jim Whittaker.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

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 January 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Gen. David H. Petraeus USA, commanding general,

Multi-National Force—Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the death of Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand

Released January 13

Transcript of a background briefing by a senior administration official on the President's trip to Saudi Arabia

Fact sheet: Fostering Freedom and Justice in the Middle East

Released January 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Counselor to the President Edward W. Gillespie and Press Secretary Dana Perino

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley

Released January 16

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Released January 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Released January 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr., and Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Edward P. Lazear

Statement by the Press Secretary on the resignation of Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas R. Burns

Fact sheet: Taking Action To Keep Our Economy Healthy

**Acts Approved
by the President**

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.