

Furthermore, the duty of the President under section 586 of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act to issue and provide copies of an order relating to consideration of the release of information is assigned to the Attorney General, who shall ensure that the section is implemented in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information, the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

Finally, to ensure proper respect for the distinct powers of the executive and legislative branches and to ensure effective coordination between them in emergencies, the Attorney General shall serve as the single officer within the executive branch authorized to receive requests from the Chief of the Capitol Police and to approve action by the executive branch in the implementation of section 1017 of the legislative branch Appropriations Act.

George W. Bush

The White House,
February 20, 2003.

NOTE: H.J. Res. 2, approved February 20, was assigned Public Law No. 108-7.

Statement on Signing the Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, 2003

February 20, 2003

Today I signed into law H.J. Res. 2, an Omnibus appropriations bill funding the remaining 11 appropriations bills for FY 2003. The funds provided in this resolution will provide important and long overdue resources for our Nations priorities, including fighting the war on terrorism and educating our most vulnerable children.

This bill provides over \$397 billion in discretionary budget authority, including \$10 billion in reserve funding for the Department of Defense, and is largely consistent with the agreed upon overall funding level. My original budget request, made a year ago, asked for the War on Terror reserve. I had separately agreed to endorse new funds for elec-

tion reform, a bill that was passed months after my budget was submitted.

Unfortunately, the Congress chose to circumvent the spending limit for FY 2003 by borrowing \$2.2 billion in funding from FY 2004. This action must be corrected by adjusting both the 2004 budget allocations and appropriations, and holding advance appropriations constant with the level enacted last year. I will ask the Leadership to ensure this happens.

This bill allocates over \$53 billion in total Education funding. The Congress provided increases for many of my high-priority programs, including programs for reading, disadvantaged students, special education, and Pell Grants.

The bill also includes \$3.3 billion in unrequested drought and other assistance, which is only minimally offset by real reductions in existing farm spending. Ninety-five percent of purported savings are scheduled to come several years from now, after the expiration of today's farm bill, and may prove illusory.

Most troublesome, H.J. Res. 2 falls nearly \$1 billion short of my request for State and local law enforcement and emergency personnel, and in particular underfunds terrorism preparedness for first responders. I requested \$3.5 billion for the First Responders Initiative. The bill, however, provides only \$1.3 billion for this purpose. Meanwhile the bill provides \$2.2 billion for existing State and local grant programs, which are not directly related to higher-priority terrorism preparedness and prevention efforts. This is unsatisfactory, and my Administration will use every appropriate tool available to ensure that these funds are directed to the highest priority homeland security needs.

This belated agreement to last years appropriations process is not perfect, but it underscores the need to move quickly on this years priorities outlined in my 2004 budget request. I look forward to working with the Congress to continue funding the war on terror, strengthening our economy, and protecting the homeland.

George W. Bush

NOTE: H.J. Res. 2, approved February 20, was assigned Public Law No. 108-7. An original was

not available for verification of the content of this statement.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Transmitting a Report on United
States Individuals Involved in the
Antinarcotics Campaign in Colombia**

February 20, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Pursuant to section 3204(f), title III, chapter 2 of the Emergency Supplemental Act, 2000 (the “Act”), as enacted in the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2001, Public Law 106–246, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration that provides “the aggregate number, locations, activities, and lengths of assignment for all temporary and permanent U.S. military personnel and U.S. individual civilians retained as contractors involved in the antinarcotics campaign in Colombia.”

In so doing, I note and appreciate the continued strong bipartisan support given to U.S. programs assisting Colombia in the Act and elsewhere.

This report is classified because of force protection considerations and the high level of terrorist threat in Colombia. However, the aggregate numbers given below are unclassified.

The report indicates that as of January 13, 2003, the end of this reporting period, there were 208 temporary and permanent U.S. military personnel and 279 U.S. civilians retained as individual contractors in Colombia involved in supporting Plan Colombia. This report further indicates that during November and December 2002, and January 2003, these figures never exceeded the ceilings established in section 3204(b) of the Act, as amended.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, 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.

February 15

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

February 16

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

February 17

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia concerning the President’s wishes for a successful conclusion to the Hajj pilgrimage, peace efforts in the Middle East, the war on terror, and the situation in Iraq.

The President then had intelligence and FBI briefings. Later in the morning, he met with President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia in the Oval Office.

February 18

In the morning, the President had intelligence and FBI briefings.

February 19

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar concerning the war on terror, the situation in Iraq, and the President’s support for political and economic reforms in Qatar. He also had a telephone conversation with President Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia concerning the war on terror, efforts to ensure the safety of Americans in Indonesia, and the situation in Iraq.

Later in the morning, the President had intelligence and FBI briefings and met with the National Security Council.

In the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with journalists from the Telemundo television network.