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PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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Radio Address by the President to the Nation

Cabinet Room

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. In one week, boys and girls in Afghanistan will start a new school year. For many girls, this will be the first time in their young lives that they will have set foot in a classroom. Under the Taliban regime, educating women was a criminal act. Under the new government of a liberated Afghanistan, educating all children is a national priority. And America, along with its coalition partners, is actively helping in that effort.

When Afghan children begin their classes they will find that the United States has already sent more than 4 million textbooks to their country. The textbooks are written in the Afghan languages of Pashto and Dari. And before the end of the year we'll have sent almost 10 million of them to the children of Afghanistan.

These textbooks will teach tolerance and respect for human dignity, instead of indoctrinating students with fanaticism and bigotry. And they will be accompanied by blackboards, teacher's kits and other school supplies.

America's children have been extremely generous in helping the children of Afghanistan. Through America's Fund for Afghan Children, they have raised more than \$4.5 million, much of which is used for school supplies like notebooks and pencils, paper and crayons, soccer balls and jump ropes. The United States will also be funding 20 teams of teacher trainers to conduct training sessions with thousands of Afghan educators.

In helping the Afghan people rebuild their country we have placed a central focus on education, and for a good reason. Education is the pathway to progress, particularly for women. Educated women tend to be healthier than those who are not well-educated. And the same is true of their families. Babies born to educated women are more likely to be immunized, better nourished, and survive their first year of life.

Educated women encourage their children to be educated, as well. And nations whose women are educated are more competitive, more prosperous and more advanced than nations where the education of women is forbidden or ignored.

We still have a lot of work to do in Afghanistan. The brave men and women of the American military continue to fight al Qaeda forces that are trying to regroup and would like nothing more than to strike America again. And even as we fight terror, American compassion is providing an alternative to bitterness, resentment and hatred.

The United States has helped Afghanistan avert mass starvation. We're repairing its roads and bridges. We're rebuilding its health clinics and schools. And in one week, with textbooks in hand, the young girls

of Afghanistan will begin school. This will be a remarkable moment in the history of Afghanistan, and a proud moment for the people of America.

Thank you for listening.

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