Good morning. I’ve just received an update

from my national security team on the

situation in Georgia. Secretary of State

Condoleezza Rice is in Tbilisi. She’s conferring

with President Saakashvili and expressing

America’s wholehearted support for

Georgia’s democracy.

She will be traveling to Crawford, where

I will meet her, and she will bring me up

to date on what she has seen and what she

heard in Georgia as well as in Paris—I mean,

in France; she did not go to Paris. Secretary

of Defense Gates will keep me briefed on

the humanitarian assistance to the people of

Georgia. We’re working closely with our

partners in Europe and other members of

the G–7 to bring a resolution to this crisis.

The United States and our allies stand with

the people of Georgia and their democratically

elected Government. Georgia’s sovereignty

and territorial integrity must be respected.

Moscow must honor its commitment

to withdraw its invading forces from

all Georgian territory.

Some Americans listening today may wonder

why events taking place in a small country

halfway around the world matter to the

United States. In the years since it’s gained

independence after the Soviet Union’s collapse,

Georgia’s become a courageous democracy.

Its people are making the tough

choices that are required of free societies.

Since the Rose Revolution in 2003, the Georgian

people have held free elections, opened

up their economy, and built the foundations

of a successful democracy.

Georgia has sent troops to Afghanistan and

Iraq to help others achieve the liberty that

they struggled so hard to attain. To further

strengthen their democracy, Georgia has

sought to join the free institutions of the

West. The people of Georgia have cast their

lot with the free world, and we will not cast

them aside.

Georgia’s emergence as a young democracy

has been part of an inspiring and hopeful

new chapter in Europe’s history. Europe has

moved beyond the world wars that killed millions

of people and the cold war that divided

its citizens between two superpowers. Every

administration since the end of the cold war

has worked with European partners to extend

the reach of liberty and prosperity. And

now, for the first time in memory, Europe

is becoming a continent that is whole, free,

and at peace.

Unfortunately, Russia has tended to view

the expansion of freedom and democracy as

a threat to its interests. The opposite is true.

Free and prosperous societies on Russia’s

borders will advance Russia’s interests by

serving as sources of stability and economic

opportunity.

We hope Russia’s leaders will recognize

that a future of cooperation and peace will

benefit all parties. The cold war is over. The

days of satellite states and spheres of influence

are behind us. A contentious relationship

with Russia is not in America’s interest,

and a contentious relationship with America

is not in Russia’s interest.

With its actions in recent days, Russia has

damaged its credibility and its relations with

the nations of the free world. Bullying and

intimidation are not acceptable ways to conduct

foreign policy in the 21st century. Only

Russia can decide whether it will now put

itself back on the path of responsible nations

or continue to pursue a policy that promises

only confrontation and isolation. To begin to

repair its relations with the United States and

Europe and other nations and to begin restoring

its place in the world, Russia must

respect the freedom of its neighbors.

Thank you.