THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
The Briefing Room

12:50 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon. As you all know, just a short time ago Secretary Christopher concluded an agreement with the leaders of Israel, Lebanon and Syria, to end the current crisis in southern Lebanon and northern Israel and to prevent it from starting again. I spoke with the Secretary this morning, shortly after 7:00, and I have just spoken with the Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who joins me in welcoming this achievement.

The agreement will stop Katyusha rocket attacks on northern Israel, and protect both Lebanese and Israeli citizens. It sets up a mechanism to which Israel and Lebanon can refer complaints, composed of those two countries, the United States, France and Syria. Because it is in writing, this agreement will be less likely to breakdown than the informal understandings that had been in place since 1993.

I want to congratulate Secretary Christopher and his team for their tireless efforts over the past week. Now the civilians on both sides of the border can return to their homes and resume their normal lives with greater confidence and greater security than in the past. I also want to commend Prime Minister Peres, President Assad, Prime Minister Hariri and the representatives of other interested governments, including France, for providing leadership which was very much needed to end this crisis.

Now, this agreement will only last if all those who worked with us to bring it about now work to make sure it succeeds. We must not, and we will not, tolerate new attempts to disrupt the calm which was been re-established at such a terrible cost.

I know I speak for all Americans in saying that our thoughts and prayers are with the innocent civilians and their families in Lebanon and in Israel who have suffered so much during the last two weeks. Now we must turn again to the hard work of building a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Thank you very much.

END

12:54 P.M. EDT