

12. PRESIDENT BUSH ON THE WAR IN IRAQ

Address to the Nation on Iraq From the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln

May 1, 2003

Thank you all very much. Admiral Kelly, Captain Card, officers and sailors of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, my fellow Americans: Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed. And now our coalition is engaged in securing and reconstructing that country.

In this battle, we have fought for the cause of liberty and for the peace of the world. Our Nation and our coalition are proud of this accomplishment; yet it is you, the members of the United States military, who achieved it. Your courage, your willingness to face danger for your country and for each other, made this day possible. Because of you, our Nation is more secure. Because of you, the tyrant has fallen, and Iraq is free.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was carried out with a combination of precision and speed and boldness the enemy did not expect and the world had not seen before. From distant bases or ships at sea, we sent planes and missiles that could destroy an enemy division or strike a single bunker. Marines and soldiers charged to Baghdad across 350 miles of hostile ground, in one of the swiftest advances of heavy arms in history. You have shown the world the skill and the might of the American Armed Forces.

This Nation thanks all the members of our coalition who joined in a noble cause. We thank the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland, who shared in the hardships of war. We thank all the citizens of Iraq who welcomed our troops and joined in the liberation of their own country. And tonight I have a special word for Secretary Rumsfeld, for General Franks, and for all the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States: America is grateful for a job well done.

The character of our military through history--the daring of Normandy, the fierce courage of Iwo Jima, the decency and idealism that turned enemies into allies--is fully present in this generation. When Iraqi civilians looked into the faces of our service men and women, they saw strength and kindness and good will.

When I look at the members of the United States military, I see the best of our country, and I'm honored to be your Commander in Chief.

In the images of falling statues, we have witnessed the arrival of a new era. For a hundred of years of war, culminating in the nuclear age, military technology was designed and deployed to inflict casualties on an ever-growing scale. In defeating Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, Allied forces destroyed entire cities, while enemy leaders who started the conflict were safe until the final days. Military power was used to end a regime by breaking a nation.

Today, we have the greater power to free a nation by breaking a dangerous and aggressive regime. With new tactics and precision weapons, we can achieve military objectives without directing violence against civilians. No device of man can remove the tragedy from war; yet it is a great moral advance when the guilty have far more to fear from war than the innocent.

In the images of celebrating Iraqis, we have also seen the ageless appeal of human freedom. Decades of lies and intimidation could not make the Iraqi people love their oppressors or desire their own enslavement.

Men and women in every culture need liberty like they need food and water and air. Everywhere that freedom arrives, humanity rejoices, and everywhere that freedom stirs, let tyrants fear.

We have difficult work to do in Iraq. We're bringing order to parts of that country that remain dangerous. We're pursuing and finding leaders of the old regime, who will be held to account for their crimes. We've begun the search for hidden chemical and biological weapons and already know of hundreds of sites that will be investigated. We're helping to rebuild Iraq, where the dictator built palaces for himself instead of hospitals and schools. And we will stand with the new leaders of Iraq as they establish a government of, by, and for the Iraqi people.

The transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every effort. Our coalition will stay until our work is done. Then we will leave, and we will leave behind a free Iraq.

The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001, and still goes on. That terrible morning, 19 evil men, the shock troops of a hateful ideology, gave America and the civilized world a glimpse of their ambitions. They imagined, in the words of one terrorist, that September the 11th would be the "beginning of the end of America."

By seeking to turn our cities into killing fields, terrorists and their allies believed that they could destroy this Nation's resolve and force our retreat from the world. They have failed.

In the battle of Afghanistan, we destroyed the Taliban, many terrorists, and the camps where they trained. We continue to help the Afghan people lay roads, restore hospitals, and educate all of their children. Yet we also have dangerous work to complete. As I speak, a Special Operations task force, led by the 82d Airborne, is on the trail of the terrorists and those who seek to undermine the free Government of Afghanistan. America and our coalition will finish what we have begun.

From Pakistan to the Philippines to the Horn of Africa, we are hunting down Al Qaida killers. Nineteen months ago, I pledged that the terrorists would not escape the patient justice of the United States. And as of tonight, nearly one-half of Al Qaida's senior operatives have been captured or killed.

The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We've removed an ally of Al Qaida and cut off a source of terrorist funding. And this much is certain: No terrorist network will gain weapons of mass destruction from the Iraqi regime, because the regime is no more.

In these 19 months that changed the world, our actions have been focused and deliberate and proportionate to the offense. We have not forgotten the victims of September the 11th--the last phone calls, the cold murder of children, the searches in the rubble. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got.

Our war against terror is proceeding according to the principles that I have made clear to all: Any person involved in committing or planning terrorist attacks against the American people becomes an enemy of this country and a target of American justice; any person, organization, or government that supports, protects, or harbors terrorists is complicit in the murder of the innocent and equally guilty of terrorist crimes; any outlaw regime that has ties to terrorist groups and seeks or possesses weapons of mass destruction is a grave danger to the civilized world and will be confronted; and anyone in the world, including the Arab world, who works and sacrifices for freedom has a loyal friend in the United States of America.

Our commitment to liberty is America's tradition, declared at our founding, affirmed in Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, asserted in the Truman Doctrine and in Ronald Reagan's challenge to an evil empire. We are committed to freedom in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and in a peaceful Palestine. The advance of freedom is the surest strategy to undermine the appeal of terror in the world. Where freedom takes hold, hatred gives way to hope. When freedom takes hold, men and women turn to the peaceful pursuit of a better life. American values and American interests lead in the same direction: We stand for human liberty.

The United States upholds these principles of security and freedom in many ways, with all the tools of diplomacy, law enforcement, intelligence, and finance. We're working with a broad coalition of nations that understand the threat and our shared responsibility to meet it. The use of force has been and remains our last resort. Yet all can know, friend and foe alike, that our Nation has a mission: We will answer threats to our security, and we will defend the peace.

Our mission continues. Al Qaida is wounded, not destroyed. The scattered cells of the terrorist network still operate in many nations, and we know from daily intelligence that they continue to plot against free people. The proliferation of deadly weapons remains a serious danger. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. Our Government has taken unprecedented measures to defend the homeland, and we will continue to hunt down the enemy before he can strike.

The war on terror is not over, yet it is not endless. We do not know the day of final victory, but we have seen the turning of the tide. No act of the terrorists will change our purpose or weaken our resolve or alter their fate. Their cause is lost. Free nations will press on to victory.

Other nations in history have fought in foreign lands and remained to occupy and exploit. Americans, following a battle, want nothing more than to return home. And that is your direction tonight. After service in the Afghan and Iraqi theaters of war, after 100,000 miles on the longest carrier deployment in recent history, you are homeward bound. Some of you will see new family members for the first time; 150 babies were born while their fathers were on the Lincoln. Your families are proud of you, and your Nation will welcome you.

We are mindful as well that some good men and women are not making the journey home. One of those who fell, Corporal Jason Mileo, spoke to his parents 5 days before his death. Jason's father said, "He called us from the center of Baghdad, not to brag but to tell us he loved us. Our son was a soldier."

Every name, every life, is a loss to our military, to our Nation, and to the loved ones who grieve. There's no homecoming for these families. Yet we pray, in God's time, their reunion will come.

Those we lost were last seen on duty. Their final act on this Earth was to fight a great evil and bring liberty to others. All of you--all in this generation of our military have taken up the highest calling of history. You're defending your country and protecting the innocent from harm. And wherever you go, you carry a message of hope, a message that is ancient and ever new. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, ``To the captives, `come out,' and to those in darkness, `be free.' "

Thank you for serving our country and our cause. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

Note: The President spoke at 6 p.m. on the deck of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln at sea off the coast of San Diego, CA. In his remarks, he referred to Rear Adm. John M. Kelly, USN, commander, Abraham Lincoln Battle Group; Capt. Kendall L. Card, USN, commanding officer, U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln; and Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Address of September 7, 2003 to the Nation

GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Good evening. I have asked for this time to keep you informed of America's actions in the war on terror.

Nearly two years ago, following deadly attacks on our country, we began a systematic campaign against terrorism. These months have been a time of new responsibilities, and sacrifice, and national resolve, and great progress.

America and a broad coalition acted first in Afghanistan by destroying the training camps of terror and removing the regime that harbored al-Qaida. In a series of raids and actions around the world, nearly two-thirds of al-Qaida's known leaders have been captured or killed, and we continue on al-Qaida's trail.

We have exposed terrorist front groups, seized terrorist accounts, taken new measures to protect our homeland and uncovered sleeper cells inside the United States.

And we acted in Iraq, where the former regime sponsored terror, possessed and used weapons of mass destruction, and for 12 years defied the clear demands of the United Nations Security Council.

Our coalition enforced these international demands in one of the swiftest and most humane military campaigns in history.

For a generation leading up to September the 11th, 2001, terrorists and their radical allies attacked innocent people in the Middle East and beyond, without facing a sustained and serious response.

The terrorists became convinced that free nations were decadent and weak. And they grew bolder, believing that history was on their side.

Since America put out the fires of September the 11th, and mourned our dead, and went to war, history has taken a different turn. We have carried the fight to the enemy. We are rolling back the terrorist threat to civilization, not on the fringes of its influence, but at the heart of its power.

This work continues. In Iraq, we are helping the long-suffering people of that country to build a decent and democratic society at the center of the Middle East. Together we are transforming a place of torture chambers and mass graves into a nation of laws and free institutions. This undertaking is difficult and costly, yet worthy of our country and critical to our security.

The Middle East will either become a place of progress and peace, or it will be an exporter of violence and terror that takes more lives in America and in other free nations. The triumph of democracy and tolerance in Iraq, in Afghanistan and beyond would be a grave setback for international terrorism. The terrorists thrive on the support of tyrants and the resentments of oppressed peoples. When tyrants fall and resentment gives way to hope, men and women in every culture reject the ideologies of terror and turn to the pursuits of peace. Everywhere that freedom takes hold, terror will retreat.

Our enemies understand this. They know that a free Iraq will be free of them, free of assassins and torturers and secret police.

They know that as democracy rises in Iraq, all of their hateful ambitions will fall like the statues of the former dictator.

And that is why, five months after we liberated Iraq, a collection of killers is desperately trying to undermine Iraq's progress and throw the country into chaos.

Some of the attackers are members of the old Saddam regime who fled the battlefield and now fight in the shadows. Some of the attackers are foreign terrorists, who have come to Iraq to pursue their war on America and other free nations.

We cannot be certain to what extent these groups work together. We do know they have a common goal, reclaiming Iraq for tyranny.

Most, but not all, of these killers operate in one area of the country. The attacks you have heard and read about in the last few weeks have occurred predominantly in the central region of Iraq, between Baghdad and Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's former stronghold.

The north of Iraq is generally stable and is moving forward with reconstruction and self-government. The same trends are evident in the south, despite recent attacks by terrorist groups.

Though their attacks are localized, the terrorists and Saddam loyalists have done great harm.

They have ambushed American and British service members who stand for freedom and order. They have killed civilian aid workers of the United Nations who represent the compassion and generosity of the world. They have bombed the Jordanian embassy, the symbol of a peaceful Arab country.

And last week they murdered a respected cleric and over a hundred Muslims at prayer, bombing a holy shrine and a symbol of Islam's peaceful teachings.

This violence is directed not only against our coalition, but against anyone in Iraq who stands for decency and freedom and progress.

There is more at work in these attacks than blind rage. The terrorists have a strategic goal. They want us to leave Iraq before our work is done. They want to shake the will of the civilized world.

In the past, the terrorists have cited the examples of Beirut and Somalia, claiming that if you inflict harm on Americans, we will run from a challenge. In this, they are mistaken.

Two years ago, I told the Congress and the country that the war on terror would be a lengthy war, a different kind of war fought on many fronts in many places. Iraq is now the central front.

Enemies of freedom are making a desperate stand there, and there they must be defeated.

This will take time and require sacrifice. Yet we will do what is necessary, we will spend what is necessary to achieve this essential victory in the war on terror, to promote freedom and to make our own nation more secure.

America has done this kind of work before. Following World War II, we lifted up the defeated nations of Japan and Germany and stood with them as they built representative governments.

We committed years and resources to this cause. And that effort has been repaid many times over in three generations of friendship and peace.

America today accepts the challenge of helping Iraq in the same spirit, for their sake and our own.

Our strategy in Iraq has three objectives: Destroying the terrorists; enlisting the support of other nations for a free Iraq; and helping Iraqis assume responsibility for their own defense and their own future.

First, we are taking direct action against the terrorists in the Iraqi theater, which is the surest way to prevent future attacks on coalition forces and the Iraqi people.

We are staying on the offensive, with a series of precise strikes against enemy targets increasingly guided by intelligence given to us by Iraqi citizens.

Since the end of major combat operations, we have conducted raids, seizing many caches of enemy weapons and massive amounts of ammunition, and we have captured or killed hundreds of Saddam loyalists and terrorists.

So far, of the 55 most wanted former Iraqi leaders, 42 are dead or in custody. We are sending a clear message: Anyone who seeks to harm our soldiers can know that our soldiers are hunting for them.

Second, we are committed to expanding international cooperation in the reconstruction and security of Iraq, just as we are in Afghanistan.

Our military commanders in Iraq advise me that the current number of American troops, nearly 130,000, is

appropriate to their mission.

They are joined by over 20,000 service members from 29 other countries.

Two multinational divisions, led by the British and the Poles, are serving alongside our forces. And in order to share the burden more broadly, our commanders have requested a third multinational division to serve in Iraq.

Some countries have requested an explicit authorization of the United Nations Security Council before committing troops to Iraq. I have directed Secretary of State Colin Powell to introduce a new Security Council resolution which would authorize the creation of a multinational force in Iraq to be led by America.

I recognize that not all our friends agreed with our decision to enforce the Security Council resolutions and remove Saddam Hussein from power, yet we cannot let past differences interfere with present duties.

Terrorists in Iraq have attacked representatives of the civilized world and opposing them must be the cause of the civilized world.

Members of the United Nations now have an opportunity, and the responsibility, to assume a broader role in assuring that Iraq becomes a free and democratic nation.

Third, we are encouraging the orderly transfer of sovereignty and authority to the Iraqi people. Our coalition came to Iraq as liberators and we will depart as liberators.

Right now Iraq has its own Governing Council, comprised of 25 leaders representing Iraq's diverse people. The Governing Council recently appointed cabinet ministers to run government departments.

Already more than 90 percent of towns and cities have functioning local governments which are restoring basic services.

We are helping to train civil defense forces to keep order and an Iraqi police service to enforce the law, a facilities protection service, Iraqi border guards to help secure the borders and a new Iraqi army.

In all these roles, there are now some 60,000 Iraqi citizens under arms, defending the security of their own country. And we are accelerating the training of more.

Iraq is ready to take the next steps toward self-government. The Security Council resolution we introduce will encourage Iraq's Governing Council to submit a plan and a timetable for the drafting of a constitution and for free elections.

From the outset, I have expressed confidence in the ability of the Iraqi people to govern themselves. Now they must rise to the responsibilities of a free people and secure the blessings of their own liberty.

Our strategy in Iraq will require new resources. We have conducted a thorough assessment of our military and reconstruction needs in Iraq, and also in Afghanistan. I will soon submit to Congress a request for \$87 billion. The request will cover ongoing military and intelligence operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, which we expect will cost \$66 billion dollars over the next year.

This budget request will also support our commitment to helping the Iraqi and Afghan people rebuild their own nations after decades of oppression and mismanagement.

We will provide funds to help them improve security. And we will help them to restore basic services, such as electricity and water, and to build new schools, roads and medical clinics.

This effort is essential to the stability of those nations, and therefore to our own security. Now and in the future, we will support our troops and we will keep our word to the more than 50 million people of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Later this month, Secretary Powell will meet with representatives of many nations to discuss their financial contributions to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Next month, he will hold a similar funding conference for the reconstruction of Iraq. Europe, Japan, and states in the Middle East all will benefit from the success of freedom in these two countries, and they should contribute to that success.

The people of Iraq are emerging from a long trial. For them, there will be no going back to the days of the dictator, to the miseries of humiliation he inflicted on that good country. For the Middle East and the world, there will be no going back to the days of fear when a brutal and aggressive tyrant possessed terrible weapons. And for America, there will be no going back to the era before September the 11th, 2001, to false comfort in a dangerous world.

We have learned that terrorist attacks are not caused by the use of strength.

They are invited by the perception of weakness. And the surest way to avoid attacks on our own people is to engage the enemy where he lives and plans.

We are fighting that enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan today so that we do not meet him again on our own streets, in our own cities.

The heaviest burdens in our war on terror fall, as always, on the men and women of our armed forces and our intelligence services. They have removed gathering threats to America and our friends, and this nation takes great pride in their incredible achievements.

We are grateful for their skill and courage, and for their acts of decency, which have shown America's character to the world.

We honor the sacrifice of their families, and we mourn every American who has died so bravely, so far from home.

The Americans who assume great risk overseas understand the great cause they are in. Not long ago I received a letter from a captain in the Third Infantry Division in Baghdad. He wrote about his pride in serving a just cause and about the deep desire of Iraqis for liberty.

"I see it," he said, "in the eyes of a hungry people every day here. They are starved for freedom and opportunity."

And he concluded, "I just thought you'd like a note from the 'front lines of freedom.'"

That Army captain and all of our men and women serving in the war on terror are on the front lines of freedom. And I want each of them to know: Your country thanks you, and your country supports you.

Fellow citizens, we have been tested these past 24 months, and the dangers have not passed. Yet Americans are responding with courage and confidence. We accept the duties of our generation. We are active and resolute in our own defense. We are serving in freedom's cause, and that is the cause of all mankind.

Thank you. And may God continue to bless America.