



THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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President and Mrs. Bush Dedicate U.S. Embassy Building in Afghanistan

United States Embassy
Kabul, Afghanistan

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3:31 P.M. (Local)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you for the warm welcome. I thought I'd just drop in to cut a ribbon. (Laughter.) Ambassador, Laura and I are honored to join you, and Mr. President, thank you for joining us.

The President just hosted a great Afghan lunch. The hospitality of the Afghan people is well known, and I enjoyed that hospitality, Mr. President. Thank you. (Applause.) I appreciate the Secretary of State joining me. I'm proud to call Condi Rice friend; America is proud to call her Secretary of State. (Applause.)

I appreciate Ron Neumann's service. There's nothing wrong with a son following in his father's footsteps. (Laughter.) When we rolled by the old embassy, he told me that it was his dad that cut the ribbon as the ambassador from the United States to Afghanistan. And here we are about to open a brand new embassy with a proud son and a great representative of our country, Ambassador Ron Neumann cutting the ribbon. (Applause.)



History sometimes spins an interesting tale, doesn't it, and such a tale is being spun today of public service. I want to thank all of my fellow citizens for working so far away from home on an incredibly important mission. I want to thank the embassy personnel, as well as our United States military personnel for being on the front line of freedom's march. I know it's a hard job, away from your families -- a long way from your families, having just flown 17 hours to get here.

But it's a vital mission. It's historic in its nature. This is the kind of mission that someday the Secretary of State will be speaking to foreign service officers and relaying the stories and the tales and the toils of those who served in Afghanistan in 2006. And so I congratulate you on your hard work, and I thank you on behalf of a grateful nation.

I also want to thank the foreign service nationals who are here, as well, those citizens of Afghanistan who are helping our folks to accomplish a big mission. I am struck by the story that our embassy was

kept open and guarded during the days of the Taliban, and when Afghanistan was liberated, there were Afghan nationals here to turn over the keys to the embassy. For those of you who are guarding our embassy, thank you. For those of you who carry on their legacy, I thank you, as well. We welcome your help, we're honored with your presence today. (Applause.)

I've been honored to welcome Afghan citizens to Washington on a fairly regular basis. Laura and I have hosted brave men and women who are dedicated to democracy and freedom in Washington. One thing they always ask me -- they ask me with their words and they ask me with their stares, as they look in my eyes -- is the United States firmly committed to the future of Afghanistan? That's what they want to know. My answer is, absolutely. It's in our nation's interest that Afghanistan develop into a democracy. It's in the interests of the United States of America for there to be examples around the world of what is possible, that it's possible to replace tyrants with a free society in which men and women are respected, which young girls can go to school to realize their full potential, in which people are able to realize their dreams.

And so my message to the people of Afghanistan is, take a look at this building. It's a big, solid, permanent structure, which should represent the commitment of the United States of America to your liberty. I firmly believe the work that we're doing together is laying the foundation of peace for generations to come. And I want to thank you for sharing that mission.

May God bless America and you and your families, and may God's blessings rain on the good people of Afghanistan. (Applause.)



(The ribbon is cut.) (Applause.)

END 3:36 P.M. (Local)