



## THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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### Remarks by Vice President Cheney and President Karzai of Afghanistan in Press Availability

Gul Khana Palace  
Kabul, Afghanistan

1:00 P.M. (Local)

PRESIDENT KARZAI: (Speaking in Dari, no translation.)

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Thank you very much, Mr. President, and good day to all of you. It's always a privilege to visit Afghanistan, and of course to be in the company of my friend, President Karzai. I'm grateful for the hospitality, Mr. President, and for the remarkable leadership that you continue to provide this nation. I'm also always especially pleased to be able to spend time with you, because of your great wisdom and knowledge of this part of the world. It's always very helpful and enlightening to have time to discuss the events of the day with the President of Afghanistan.

During the last six years, the people of Afghanistan have made a bold and confident journey, throwing off the burden of tyranny, winning your freedom and reclaiming your future. The process has been difficult, but the courage of the nation has been unwavering. The United States of America has proudly walked with you on this journey, and we walk with you still. And today I bring you the warmest friendship and good wishes of the American people, and of our President, George W. Bush.



I'm here to reaffirm the bonds of friendship and cooperation that define relations between our two countries. Having led a coalition to remove the former regime, the United States continues to lead the effort to rebuild Afghanistan and to help its people consolidate the gains of democracy.

Last week in Washington, President Bush and I met by video conference with some of those serving on the 25 provincial reconstruction teams. They told us of the challenges that remain, as well as of the progress that's been achieved.

The reconstruction of Afghanistan goes forward, from roads and bridges to schools, power plants and clinics. And in the current year, America is providing security and reconstruction assistance at a level nearly three times higher than the year before.

The progress of this nation is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that there is a war going

on. All future success will hinge on the defeat of the extremists and the terrorists who want to pull this country back to the dark ages. Here as well, the commitment of the United States is firm and unshakable. We are beginning this month to deploy an additional 3,200 U.S. Marines here. And two weeks from now, at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Afghanistan will be high on the agenda.

The International Security Assistance Force includes more than 40,000 troops from more than three dozen nations. The ISAF has made a tremendous difference in this country, and America will ask our NATO allies for an even stronger commitment for the future.

All free nations have an interest in a secure, democratic Afghanistan. Our goal is a country that grows in justice and prosperity; a country whose military and police gradually assume more security duties; a free and hopeful Afghanistan that never again suffers the heartless brutality that it had to endure under the Taliban.

That vision of peace and freedom will become a reality. I have no doubt about this. The elected leaders of this country and the millions they serve are people of deep and persevering character. Mr. President, the people of the United States are committed to this mission in Afghanistan, and to the long-term success of your nation. We look to you with admiration and respect, and we look to you and the future with confidence.

**PRESIDENT KARZAI:** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. This was a tremendously encouraging statement. Thank you very much.

**VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY:** Thank you, sir. (Applause.)



**PRESIDENT KARZAI:** Question time?

**Q (As translated.)** Thank you. I just wanted to know about the future deployment of U.S. troops to Afghanistan, that you said about 3,200 troops to be deployed to Afghanistan. And he has been -- while he emphasizes on deploying more troops, as we heard that senator from the U.S. lately said that a cost of one U.S. or NATO soldier equals to training 60 Afghan soldiers. So how do you compare these two assessments? I think to pay more attention to training Afghan army and security forces can be more important in tackling insecurity, instability. I think it's enough, one question is enough.

**VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY:** I think that our general view is that we need to do both; that is to say that the United States and the other members of the coalition need to have a sufficient force here to be able to ensure security, to deal with a threat that's been represented by continuing activities by the radicals and extremists, and the likes of the Taliban and al Qaeda, but that ultimately security in Afghanistan will depend upon the ability of the Afghan people to provide adequate forces that are well trained and well equipped.

So we are moving forward on both fronts, working with your government here in Afghanistan, to at the same time have U.S. forces continue to work in security and reconstruction, while at the

same time we work with you to train the forces sufficiently so that someday Afghanistan will be able to stand on its own.

**PRESIDENT KARZAI:** (As translated.) I would like to add some comments over His Excellency's words. We are deeply grateful and thankful to the U.S. and to the government and the people of the United States for the assistance and the commitment they are making in helping train and strengthen our army.



And we have always expressed our -- we have already said in any meeting we have been discussing, that the army -- our Afghan army is many times better now, and that they are getting stronger day by day. Yesterday I spoke with the elders from the southern province of Helmand who came here to visit me. They told me that, Mr. President, the more we have Afghan army forces there, the more convenient and safe we will be.

So Afghan national army is in place, with a full commitment by the assistance of the people of the United States, for which we are very grateful.

**VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY:** Deb Reichman of AP.

**Q** Mr. Vice President, what makes you confident that NATO members will step up and do what's needed to help Afghanistan through this period? And what does it mean for the future of NATO ground operations if they don't?

And I have a question for President Karzai, as well. Is it possible that without more international support that Afghanistan risks sliding into a failed state and being the forgotten war that's often talked about? And how worried are you at this particular juncture, and are you willing to continue to lead this nation?

**VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY:** With respect to NATO, this obviously has been a very important mission -- really the first time in the history of the Alliance that we've had this kind of commitment this far from the normal NATO area of responsibility. But I think we are better off by virtue of NATO's presence. I think they've made a significant contribution in many parts of the country. And we believe that that commitment needs to continue, and perhaps be reinforced.

It's one of the reasons when the President goes to Bucharest here in a couple of weeks to participate in the NATO summit, one of the most important items on the agenda will be the NATO role and mission here in Afghanistan. I would expect that we'll see a reaffirmation and a resumption, if you will, or renewal of the commitment that we've made collectively as an Alliance to the independence and freedom of the people of Afghanistan. I'm quite confident that in fact NATO will continue to play a major role and hopefully even expand their efforts beyond those that they've already undertaken.

**PRESIDENT KARZAI:** Ma'am, the continuation of NATO's role in Afghanistan in the fight against terrorism and providing stability for Afghanistan is very, very important. I don't know if it was translated to you, my earlier remarks, I said that the Afghan army is also doing



very, very well, and we as a people are extremely grateful to the United States for having given us this training for the army and equipping the army and giving it the strength to serve the Afghan people.

In my meetings with Afghan people, I found out that the army is more and more seen as a force that brings stability. So as the Afghan army gets stronger and stronger, so will be lesser the pressure on the international security forces. Until then, the cooperation between Afghanistan and the rest of the international community is a must, both for the war against terrorism and stability in Afghanistan.

With regard to the failed state theory, or statement, I would like to quote to you the President of Slovenia, who in a meeting with our foreign minister last month said something very interesting -- that Afghanistan was not a failed state, that Afghanistan was a destroyed state. So from 2002, when the rest of the international community, led by the United States, came to Afghanistan, they liberated a destroyed state from the grips of terrorism and al Qaeda, and began to rebuild this destroyed state. In the rebuilding of the destroyed state we have taken significant steps, from not having even one kilometer of a paved road, now we have more than 3,000 kilometers of paved highways and other roads. Go to schools, go to hospitals, go to lots of other reconstruction activities in the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

So Afghanistan cannot be categorized as a failed state. We were a formidable nation without a government, without the institutions. For the past six years we have also built the institutions and the government, elections, parliament, democracy, political parties, freedom of speech. From one television channel -- the government one -- not functioning very well in 2002, today we have 14 television channels and hundreds of newspapers and radios and media.

So thanks to you, the international community, for having giving us all of that; please continue.

Q Your personal political --

PRESIDENT KARZAI: My personal political situation -- that's a tough question. I would like to continue to contribute to the Afghan people in the best of my abilities. I would also like to leave a legacy for Afghanistan of bringing up new leadership for this country. It is not important for me to think only of running for the President of Afghanistan, it is also important for me to leave behind a legacy in which Afghanistan will continue for many, many centuries from now onwards as a strong nation with strong leadership that comes one after another.



VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Somebody over there?

PRESIDENT KARZAI: This man is from the Voice of America?

Q Yes.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Okay.

Q (As translated.) Thank you, Mr. President. My question goes both to you and to His Excellency,

the Vice President. The government in Pakistan changed, and there a government based on the will of the people is put in place. What does the United States of America think how they will be able to convince the Pakistan government to help their best in helping fight the terrorism along the borders and in help stabilize Afghanistan?

And my question to you, Mr. President, is what are you expecting from the new government in Pakistan in the fight against terrorism?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: We have a good relationship with the government and the people of Pakistan. There are many historic ties between America and Pakistan, and of course we've worked closely with President Musharraf during his tenure and time in office, and we look forward to working with the new government of Pakistan once it's finalized as a result of the elections.

We believe, as I think most people do, that a government has an obligation to control its sovereign territory, to make certain that that territory doesn't become a safe haven or a sanctuary for -- especially -- terrorist groups intending to do harm to others. I would expect that Pakistan will certainly fulfill that obligation in the years ahead. It's important not only to the people of Pakistan, but also to others who might be threatened by developments in those areas if they're not properly controlled by the sovereign government of Pakistan.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: (As translated.) We with the brotherly country of Pakistan, thanks to God, have had a very good relationship and good ties. We are doing everything possible to even improve and further (inaudible) than the cooperation. Of course it's important that the cooperation to fight terrorism is important, and the cooperation between two countries supported by the international community is very important, because the threat of terrorism is something that endangers both the nations, which requires the full cooperation between the two countries.

We are -- the latest change is the elected government and yesterday's election of a head of their parliament, speaker of their parliament, was a good sign. And here, taking this opportunity, I would like to congratulate the Pakistanis and our Pakistani brothers and sisters over the election of their speaker of the house, and especially that the new speaker is a woman. We would like to have more cooperation in that field. Thank you.

(Speaking English.) Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, very nice of you. Any more questions?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: No, I'm fine.

Q Oh.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: You're disappointed? One more question. Don't disappoint the press ever.

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Don't disappoint the press ever. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Please, ma'am.



VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: I can tell I should have begun my career with your guidance, Mr. President. (Laughter.) Toby Zakaria, Reuters.

Q Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Vice President. To follow up on the previous question, do you believe that Pakistan under -- after the elections will be a stronger or a weaker ally to the United States going forward? And do you have a reaction to the latest Osama bin Laden tape, and do you think he's ever going to be caught?

And Mr. President, do you want to see more foreign troops from NATO in Afghanistan, or do you find that prospect might be a little destabilizing for your country?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: With respect to the new government of Pakistan, I expect they'll be good and effective friends and allies of the United States, just as the previous government has been. I think with respect to the question of their work on those areas that we've been concerned about, that I mentioned previously, the areas along the border, I have no reason to doubt their commitment to dealing with the problems that emerge from that area if terror groups are allowed to operate from there, in part because I think their government is a target for the al Qaeda and the extremists in the northwest section of Pakistan. You've seen a number of devastating attacks against the people and government of Pakistan, including of course the tragic assassination of former Prime Minister Bhutto.

So they have as big a stake as anyone else in dealing with the threat that sometimes emerges from those areas along the border.

Q What about the Osama bin Laden tape?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: I haven't seen the statement.



PRESIDENT KARZAI: Ma'am, we like an effective continuation of the two missions that we have here. One is the fight against terrorism, the other is the rebuilding of Afghanistan and especially the rebuilding of the security institutions, the army.

As we get stronger with our own institutions, so will be lesser the responsibility of the international community in defending Afghanistan and fighting terrorism. So this will -- this is a gradual improvement on our side, and as it is a gradual improvement on our side, it's also a gradual reduction of responsibility on the shoulders of the international community.

But that is not going to be any time soon. Afghanistan will need for a long time support from the international community in the rebuilding exercise here in Afghanistan, and in strengthening of the Afghan security institutions. Though if you compare us to 2002, today Afghanistan is in a much better shape in all aspects than we were then. Our security institutions are stronger, we are able to take more and more responsibility for the provision of security to our population around the country.

Six years from now, Afghanistan perhaps will be in a much better position than it is today, and that is how things will move forward. And some day Afghanistan will be fully in charge of the security of this country, defending the borders, and we'll be very grateful to the rest of the international

community; we'll thank it forever.

Thank you.

END 1:24 P.M. (Local)