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Office of the Press Secretary
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President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This week marked another important milestone in carrying out our strategy in Iraq. On Tuesday, the Iraqi election commission formerly certified the passage of the new Iraqi constitution, after nearly 10 million Iraqis turned out to vote on it two weeks ago. This is a moment of tremendous significance for Iraq, the region, and the world. Three years ago, when Saddam Hussein ruled with an iron grip, the prospect of Iraqis voting on a democratic constitution would have been unthinkable. Now, the Iraqi people have shown that individual rights and rule by the people are universal principles, and that these principles can become the basis for free and decent governments throughout the Middle East.

The new Iraqi constitution received support from Iraqis of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Iraq's largest Sunni political party endorsed the constitution and urged its followers to approve the draft. Many more Sunnis participated in this vote than in January's historic elections, and the level of violence was also dramatically lower. Even those who voted against the constitution are now organizing and preparing for elections in December.

Just 30 months removed from the rule of a dictator, and nine months after they first elected their own leaders, the Iraqi people are resolving tough issues through an inclusive political process. And this process is isolating the extremists who wish to derail democracy through violence and murder.

The terrorists were also watching the Iraqi vote. These brutal killers follow a radical ideology that exploits Islam to serve a violent political vision. They hope to establish a totalitarian state in Iraq that denies all political and religious freedom, and they hope to use that country as a



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base for attacks on all people -- Muslim and non-Muslim alike -- who disagree with their twisted perversion of the Muslim faith.

The terrorists' goals leave no room for individual conscience or democratic participation, so they threatened to kill any Iraqi who went to the polls, including women and the elderly, and even those who opposed the constitution. And they continue to use random bombings to try to break the will of the Iraqi people and of coalition forces, as we saw again this week, when the terrorists bombed two Baghdad hotels.

Instead of surrendering to intimidation, the Iraqi people once again risked their lives for their liberty. Instead of turning against one another, the Iraqi people turned out to express their will at the polls. And instead of allowing their nation to become a haven for terrorists, the Iraqis are choosing democracy and freedom for their country.

The political process in Iraq now moves forward. Iraqis will return to the polls in December to elect a new government under their new constitution. This government will be our ally in the war on terror, a partner in the struggle for peace and moderation in the Muslim world, and an inspiration for people across the Middle East to claim their liberty as well.

Our security at home is directly linked to a Middle East that grows in freedom and peace. The success of the new Iraqi government is critical to winning the war on terror and protecting the American people. Ensuring that success will require more sacrifice, more time, and more resolve, and it will involve more risk for Iraqis and for American and coalition forces.

The progress we have made so far has involved great sacrifice. The greatest burden has fallen on our military families. We've lost some of our nation's finest men and women in the war on terror. Each of them has left grieving families and loved ones back home. Each loss of life is heartbreaking. Yet these patriots have also left a legacy that will allow generations of their fellow Americans, and millions of others who have only known oppression, to enjoy the blessings of liberty.

The best way to honor the sacrifice of our fallen troops is to complete the mission and win the war on terror. We will train Iraqi security forces and help a newly elected government meet the needs of the Iraqi people. In doing so, we will lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

Thank you for listening.

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