



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

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President Addresses Troops at Osan Air Base in Osan, Korea

Osan Air Base Osan,
Republic of Korea

 [President's Trip to Asia](#)

 [In Focus: Defense](#)

4:29 P.M. (Local)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. Thank you all very much. (Applause.) Please be seated -- unless you don't have a seat. (Laughter.) Laura and I are so honored to be here. We thought we'd stop by and feel the thunder and the fury of the Mustangs. (Applause.) Thanks for greeting us. It's a privilege to stand with the brave men and women of the 51st Fighter Wing and the 7th Air Force. (Applause.) Our citizens are safer because you're ready to fight tonight. (Applause.) You're serving the cause of liberty on distant frontiers, and I bring a message from home: Your Commander-in-Chief is proud of you, and so is the American people. (Applause.)

For half a century American servicemen and women have stood faithful and vigilant watch here in Korea. You've kept the peace and you secured the freedom won at great cost in the Korean War. You've ensured that no American life was lost in vain. In five decades, since Task Force Smith first landed at Pusan, the world has watched America's steadfast and unwavering commitment to freedom.

Three years of war made America and Korea enduring allies in the struggle for liberty. And five decades of sacrifice by the men and women of our Armed Forces secured peace and democracy on this peninsula. And the world is better off for it. Your courage has brought stability to the region, freedom to millions, and honor to the uniform. Our nation is grateful for your service -- your service for freedom and peace. (Applause.)

The Republic of Korea is now a beacon of liberty that shines across the most heavily armed border in the world. It is a light reaching to a land shrouded in darkness. Together the United States and the Republic of Korea have shown that the future belongs to freedom and one day, all Koreans will enjoy the blessings of freedom. (Applause.)



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President's Remarks

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I'm proud to be traveling with the First Lady, Laura Bush -- (applause) -- and the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. (Applause.) I thank General LaPorte and his wife, Judy. I want to thank General Trexler and his wife, Kathie; General Campbell; General Joe Reynes, and his wife, Karen; Command Sergeant Major Barry Wheeler; Command -- Chief Master Sergeant Vance Clarke; Chief Master Sergeant Richard Jette. Thank you all for being here. (Applause.)

I'm pleased to see the military families here. (Applause.) I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your sacrifice in the cause of freedom. Our military families stand strong, and America appreciates you very much. (Applause.)

I visited Osan before and I notice you've got an impressive runway here -- a lot of room for any pilot, so as Air Force One was approaching, I told our pilot, no excuses, you better spike it at Osan. (Laughter.) And he did. This air base and runway were armed earned by the determination and the grit of the United States military, and a brave coalition of the willing. Not far from here, during the Korean War, Captain Louis L. Millett took Hill 180. (Applause.) Faced with superior numbers, Captain Millett withheld communist forces by leading the first bayonet charge by a U.S. Army company since World War I. For his valor, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

As part of the 30,000 active duty personnel in Korea, you're upholding the same proud tradition. You know what it takes to win a war; you know how to protect the peace; and you know what it takes to defend our nation. (Applause.)



To defend our country, and to defend freedom, we've got more work ahead. For decades, America's Armed Forces abroad have essentially remained where the wars of the last century ended in Europe and in Asia. So more than three years ago, we launched a comprehensive review of America's global force posture -- the numbers and types and locations and capability of our forces around the world.

We're transforming our military. Over the coming decade, we'll take advantage of 21st century military technologies so we can deploy rapidly, with increased combat power. This will help improve the lives of our military and their families, because more of our troops will be stationed and deployed for home. And this will help us meet the threats of the 21st century. By transforming our military, we'll more be able to do our duty to protect the American people.

As South Korea has grown more free and prosperous, it's built an increasingly capable military that is now ready to assume a larger role in defending its people. By assuming some responsibilities that have traditionally been shouldered by American forces, South Korea will strengthen the deterrent on the Korean Peninsula and free up some of our combat forces to help us win the war on terror.

And that war began on September the 11th, 2001. On that morning, Americans saw the violence and

hatred of a new enemy. We saw the terrorists' destructive vision for us and for all who love freedom. And in the face of this threat, our nation has made a clear choice: We'll confront this mortal danger; we will stay on the offensive; we will not wait to be attacked again. We will not rest or tire until the war on terror is won. (Applause.)

For more than four years, we've seen the brutal nature of the enemy. They've targeted the innocent in scores of countries from almost every walk of life. In Casablanca they killed diners enjoying their evening meal. In Bali, they killed tourists on a holiday. In Beslan, they killed Russian school children. They've murdered workers in Riyadh and commuters in Madrid and hotel guests in Jakarta, and guests at a wedding celebration in Amman, Jordan. They killed Iraqi children. The tragic images of innocent victims can make it seem like these terrorist attacks are random, isolated acts of madness. While these killers choose their victims indiscriminately, their attacks flow from an ideology and a terrifying vision for the world. Their acts are evil, but they're not insane.

Some call this evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant jihadism; still others, Islamo fascism. Whatever we choose to call this enemy, we must recognize that this ideology is very different from the tenets of the great religion of Islam. This form of radicalism exploits Islam to serve a violent, political vision: the establishment by terrorism, subversion and insurgency of a totalitarian empire that denies all political and religious freedom.



We know the vision of the radicals because they openly state it in videos and audio tapes and letters and declarations and websites. These extremists want to end American and Western influence in the broader Middle East, because we stand for democracy and peace, and stand in the way of their ambitions. The tactics of al Qaeda and other Islamic extremists has been consistent for a quarter-century. They hit us and they expect us to run.

Recently, the world learned of a letter written by al Qaeda number two leader, a man named Zawahiri. He wrote this letter to his chief deputy in Iraq, the terrorist Zarqawi. In it, Zawahiri points to the Vietnam War as a model for al Qaeda. He writes, "The aftermath of the collapse of American power in Vietnam and how they ran and left their agents is noteworthy." The terrorists witnessed our response after the attacks of American -- on American troops in Beirut in 1983, and Mogadishu in 1993. They concluded that America can be made to run again, only this time on a larger scale, with greater consequences. The terrorists are mistaken; America will never run. We will stand and fight, and we will win the war on terror. (Applause.)

The terrorists state their plans. They want to use the vacuum that would be created by an American retreat to gain control of a country, to build a base from which to launch attacks on America and to conduct their war against non-radical Muslim governments.

Over the past few decades, radicals have specifically targeted Egypt and Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and Jordan for potential takeovers. And for a time, they achieved their goal in Afghanistan, until they

came face to face with the men and women of the United States military. (Applause.)

In Afghanistan, we put the terrorists on the run, and now they've set their sights on another country -- they're trying to turn Iraq into what Afghanistan was under the Taliban, a terrorist sanctuary from which they can plan and launch attacks against our people. The terrorists regard Iraq as the central front in their war against humanity. And we must recognize Iraq as the central front in our war against the terrorists.

These militants believe that controlling one country will rally the Muslim masses, enabling them to overthrow moderate governments in the region and establish a radical Islamic empire that reaches from Spain to Indonesia. If they're not stopped, the terrorists will be able to advance their agenda to develop weapons of mass destruction, to destroy Israel, to intimidate Europe, and to break our will and blackmail our government into isolation. I'm going to make you this commitment: This is not going to happen on my watch. (Applause.)

Some might be tempted to dismiss the terrorist goals as fanatical or extreme. They are fanatical and extreme, but we cannot afford to dismiss them. Evil men obsessed with ambition and unburdened by conscience must be taken very seriously. Against such an enemy, there's only one effective response: We will never back down, and we will never give in, and we'll never accept anything less than complete victory. (Applause.)

We didn't ask for this global struggle, but we're answering history's call with a comprehensive strategy to win this war on terror. First, we're determined to prevent attacks by terrorist networks by protecting the homeland and working with our allies to destroy the terrorist networks and incapacitate their leaders.

Together with our coalition partners, we've disrupted a number of serious al Qaeda terrorist plots since September the 11th, including several al Qaeda plots to attack inside the United States. Our coalition against terrorists killed or captured nearly all those directly responsible for the September the 11th attacks. We've captured or killed several of bin Laden's most senior deputies and al Qaeda managers and operatives in numerous countries. And we will stay on the hunt. We will not relent until the terror networks that threaten us are exposed and broken and their leaders are held to account for their murder. (Applause.)

Second, we're determined to deny weapons of mass destruction to outlaw regimes and to their terrorist allies who would use them without hesitation. Working with Great Britain and Pakistan and other nations, we exposed and disrupted a major black market operation in nuclear technology led by A.Q. Khan. Libya has abandoned its chemical and nuclear weapons programs, as well as its long-range ballistic missiles. And last year, America and our partners in the Proliferation Security Initiative have stopped more than a dozen shipments of suspect weapons technology, including equipment for Iran's ballistic missile program. So long as I'm your President, we'll continue to deny the world's most dangerous men the world's most dangerous weapons.

Third, we are determined to deny radical groups the support and sanctuary of outlaw regimes. So I've laid out a clear doctrine: The United States makes no distinction between those who commit acts of

terror and those who support and harbor the terrorists, because they're equally guilty of murder. (Applause.) Any government that chooses to be an ally of terror has also chosen to be an enemy of civilization, and the civilized world will hold those regimes to account.

Fourth, we're determined to deny the militants' control of any nation which they would use as a home base and a launching pad for terror.

This mission has brought new and urgent responsibilities to all who wear the uniform. American troops are fighting beside our Afghan partners against remnants of the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies. And American troops are fighting alongside courageous Iraqis against the remnants of a regime and a network of terrorists who want to stop the advance of a free Iraq. Our goal is to defeat the terrorists and allies -- and their allies at the heart of their power. And so we will defeat the enemy in Iraq.

As we pursue the terrorists, our military is helping to train Iraqi security forces so they can defend their people, and so they can fight the enemy. And we're making steady progress. With every passing month, more and more Iraqi forces are standing up, and the Iraqi military is gaining new capabilities and new confidence. At the time of our Fallujah operations a year ago, there were only a few Iraqi army battalions in combat. Today there are more than 90 Iraqi army battalions fighting the terrorists, along with our forces. American and Iraqi troops are conducting major assaults to clear out enemy fighters in Baghdad and other parts of Iraq. Iraqi police and security forces are helping clear the terrorists from their strongholds. They're holding onto areas we've cleared and are preventing the enemy from returning.

Our strategy can be summed up this way: As Iraqis stand up, we will stand down, and when our commanders on the ground tell me that Iraqi forces can defend their freedom, our troops will come home with the honor they have earned. (Applause.)

The second part of our strategy is a political strategy. Iraqis are moving forward in building a democracy. A month ago, millions of Iraqis turned out to vote for a constitution that guarantees fundamental freedoms and lays the foundation for lasting democracy. In a few weeks, Iraqis will vote again to choose a fully constitutional government to lead them for the next four years. Iraq is making amazing progress from the days of being under the thumb of a brutal dictator. Think about this: In two-and-a-half years, they've gone from tyranny to an election for a transitional government, to the ratification of a constitution, to the election of a free government. The Iraqi people are proving their determination to build a future founded on democracy and hope, and the United States of America will help them succeed. (Applause.)

The fifth element of our strategy in the war on terror is to deny the militants future recruits by replacing hatred and resentment with democracy and hope across the broader Middle East. If the Middle East is left to grow in bitterness, if countries remain in misery while radicals stir the resentments of millions, then that part of the world will be a source of endless conflict and mounting danger. If the peoples of that region are permitted to choose their own destiny, and advance by their own energy and participation as both free men and women, then the extremists will be marginalized, and the flow of violent radicalism to the rest of the world will slow and eventually end.

History has proven that free nations are peaceful nations and that democracies do not fight their neighbors. By advancing the hope of freedom and democracy for others, we'll make our own freedom more secure.

Our men and women in uniform who are serving on the Korean Peninsula have seen freedom succeed in Asia. By promoting freedom in Japan, we helped transform an enemy into a democracy that is one of the world's most prosperous nations, and one of America's most trusted allies. By standing firm against a determined enemy, we helped provide the people of South Korea with the peace and stability they needed to transform their economy and claim their own freedom. And by helping the people of Asia build successful and thriving democracies, we have helped set a hopeful example for the world. In the 21st century, we go forward with confidence because we know that freedom is the destiny of every man, woman, and child on this Earth. (Applause.)

Our work for peace and freedom involves great sacrifice by our troops. We see this sacrifice in Iraq, where our troops are hunting down the terrorists, and we're helping the Iraqi people build a working democracy. In Washington, there are some who say that the sacrifice is too great, and they urge us to set a date for withdrawal before we have completed our mission. Those who are in the fight know better. One of our top commanders in Iraq, Major General William Webster, says that setting a deadline for our withdrawal from Iraq would be, "a recipe for disaster." General Webster is right. So long as I'm the Commander-in-Chief, our strategy in Iraq will be driven by the sober judgment of our military commanders on the ground. We will fight the terrorists in Iraq. We will stay in the fight until we have achieved the brave -- the victory that our brave troops have fought for. (Applause.)

In this time of war and sacrifice, the greatest burden falls on our military families. We've lost some of our nation's finest men and women in the war on terror. Each of these men and women left grieving families and loved ones back home. Each loss of life is heartbreaking. And the best way to honor the sacrifices of our fallen troops is to complete their mission and lay the foundation of peace for our children and our grandchildren. (Applause.)

With the rise of a deadly enemy, and the unfolding of a global ideological struggle, our time in history will be remembered for new challenges and unprecedented dangers. And yet this fight we have joined is also the current expression of an ancient struggle between those who put their faith in dictators and those who put their faith in the people. Throughout history, tyrants and would-be tyrants have always claimed that murder is justified to serve their grand vision, and they end up alienating decent people across the globe. Tyrants and would-be tyrants have always claimed that regimented societies are strong and pure, until those societies collapse in corruption and decay. Tyrants and would-be tyrants have always claimed that free men and women are weak and decadent, until the day that free men and women defeat them.

We don't know the course our own struggle will take, or the sacrifices that might lie ahead. We do know, however, that the defense of freedom is worth our sacrifice. We know that the love of freedom is the mightiest force in history. And we do know the cause of freedom will once again prevail.

May God bless you all. Thank you all. (Applause.)

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