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Office of the Press Secretary  
April 29, 2006

## President's Radio Address

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**THE PRESIDENT:** Good morning. Last weekend, the people of Iraq formed a national unity government. This is an important milestone on the road to democracy in Iraq, and it marks the beginning of a new chapter in America's involvement. Last Sunday, I talked to the President, Prime Minister-designate, and Speaker of the new government. And this week, I sent Secretary of State Rice and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld to Baghdad to meet face-to-face with the new Iraqi leadership. We've all been impressed by the Iraqi leaders' commitment to maintain the unity of their country and effectively represent the Iraqi people.

The new Iraqi government will face many challenges. Iraqi leaders agree that the new government must continue to build up the Iraqi Security Forces to defeat the terrorists and must establish control over militias. They also agree that the new government must rebuild critical infrastructure, strengthen the Iraqi economy, and ensure that all Iraqis benefit as their nation grows in security and prosperity.

During their meetings in Baghdad, Secretaries Rice and Rumsfeld made clear that Iraq will have the continued support of America and our coalition partners, as we begin the new chapter in our relationship. We will help the new Iraqi government assume growing responsibility for the nation's security. And as Iraqis continue to make progress toward a democracy that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, more of our troops can come home with the honor they have earned.

The terrorists clearly recognize the threat that the new unity government poses to their dark plans for Iraq and the broader Middle East. This week the terrorist Zarqawi, leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, released a video in which he denounced the new government and promised further acts of terrorist violence. Zarqawi lashed out at what he called "this rotten play of democracy" and declared that Iraq's new government will become "a poisoned dagger" in the heart of his plans for the Muslim world.

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On Wednesday, Iraq's leaders united to strongly condemn Zarqawi's statements. One Iraqi official declared that the terrorists and insurgents, quote, "are feeling this might be the last chance they have to survive. They're fighting everyone in Iraq -- every Iraqi. I think that shows how weak they are." End quote. A newly appointed first Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi parliament said that Zarqawi fears the new government will unify Shiites and Sunnis and Kurds. He said, quote, "I believe that Zarqawi was caught off guard by the new government taking shape because it will be a very strong one representing all Iraqis." End quote.

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The new leaders of Iraq are showing great courage in the face of terrorist threats. In recent weeks, terrorists have assassinated three siblings of top Iraqi politicians -- but the new leaders of Iraq remain determined to lead their nation toward a future of democracy and peace. These brave leaders deserve our continued support -- and I have told them they can count on America to stand with them.

The enemy is resorting to desperate acts of violence because they know the establishment of democracy in Iraq will be a double defeat for them. First, it will deny the terrorists their immediate aim of turning Iraq into what Afghanistan was under the Taliban -- a safe haven where they can plot and plan more attacks against free nations. Second, in the long term, a democratic Iraq will be a major blow to the terrorists' hateful ideology because it will send a powerful message across the region that the future of the Middle East belongs to freedom.

There will be more tough fighting ahead in Iraq and more days of sacrifice and struggle. Yet the enemies of freedom have suffered a real blow in recent days, and we have taken great strides on the march to victory. Iraq's leaders now have laid the foundations for a democratic government of, by, and for the Iraqi people. By helping the Iraqi people build their democracy, America will deal the terrorists a crippling blow and establish a beacon of liberty in the Middle East -- and that will make our Nation and the world more secure.

Thank you for listening.

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