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Office of the Press Secretary
May 27, 2006

President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This Memorial Day weekend, Americans pay tribute to those who have given their lives in service to our Nation. America is free because generations of young Americans have been willing to sacrifice to defend the country they love, so their fellow citizens could live in liberty.

This weekend, I am visiting some of the brave men and women who will soon take their own place in the defense of our freedom -- the 2006 graduating class at West Point. This was the first class to arrive at West Point after the attacks of September the 11th, 2001. Each of them came to West Point in a time of war, knowing all the risks and dangers that come with wearing our Nation's uniform. And the reality of that war has surrounded them since their first moments at the Academy. Thirty-four times since they arrived at West Point, they have observed a moment of silence to honor a former cadet fallen in the war on terror.

One of those former cadets was First Lieutenant Rob Seidel, a 2004 West Point graduate who gave his life in Iraq earlier this month. Rob grew up in Maryland, and as a child he and his family made frequent visits to the Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg, and from his earliest days he dreamed of serving in the U.S. Army. He deployed to Iraq with the 10th Mountain division and was killed by a bomb in Baghdad. His father says this about Rob: "He loved his family, and believed in God, and he loved his country, and he was willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of his country."

We live in freedom because of young Americans like Lieutenant Rob Seidel. And in recent days in Iraq, we've seen what their sacrifices have made possible. A week ago, the new Prime Minister of Iraq announced the formation of a national unity government. British Prime Minister Tony Blair recently visited Baghdad to meet with Prime Minister Maliki and Iraq's new leaders, and this week he came to the United States to give



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me his impressions. Prime Minister Blair told me that Iraq's new leaders are determined to rid their country of terrorism, unite Iraqis as one people, and deliver peace and prosperity for all their citizens.

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The formation of a democratic government in Iraq marks a victory for the cause of freedom in the Middle East. It is a victory for millions of Iraqis who defied the terrorists and cast their ballots in three elections last year. It is a victory for the Iraqi Security Forces, who fought and bled for this moment, and now have a democracy worthy of their sacrifice. And it is a victory for the American, British, and other coalition forces who removed a murderous dictator who threatened the world. Because of their courage and sacrifices, Iraq has a free government that will be a strong and capable ally in the global war on terror.

The new government in Iraq is also a defeat for the terrorists, who fought the arrival of a free and democratic Iraq with all the hateful power they could muster. Now, a day that they feared has arrived. The terrorists can kill the innocent, but they cannot stop the advance of freedom. We can expect the terrorists to continue bombing and killing, but something fundamental has changed: The terrorists are now fighting a free and constitutional government. They are at war with the people of Iraq. The Iraqi people and their new leaders are determined to defeat this enemy, and so is the United States of America.

This Memorial Day weekend, we remember First Lieutenant Seidel and the brave Americans of every generation who have given their lives for freedom, liberated the oppressed, and left the world a safer and better place. And the best way to honor America's fallen heroes is to carry on their fight, defend our freedom, and complete the mission for which they gave their lives.

Thank you for listening.

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