



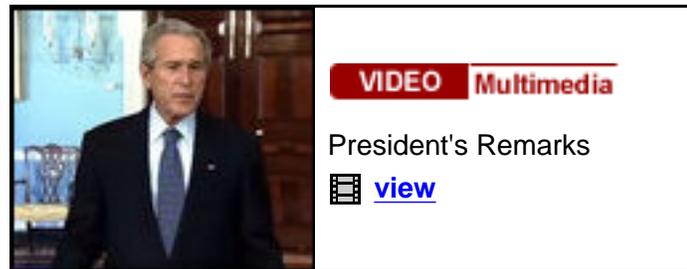
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President Bush Meets with Senior State Department Officials on Iraq

United States Department of State
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[In Focus: Renewal in Iraq](#)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all for coming. I just had a briefing with senior policy advisors here at the State Department. I want to thank you for your hospitality, Madam Secretary.



We talked about a lot of things. We talked about what's taking place on the ground in Iraq, particularly from the perspective of the State Department. I must tell you, there are some fantastic, brave souls who are heading PRTs, provincial reconstruction teams. These are our civilian components on the ground there in Iraq. And we got a briefing from Baghdad with one of our PRT leaders here in Washington about the challenges and the tasks to help this Iraqi government get a country that can sustain and govern and defend itself.

No question in my mind, there are some very brave State Department officials who are engaged in this really important endeavor. And I want to thank them and their families. I appreciate the advice I got from those folks in the field. And that advice is an important part, an important component of putting together a new way forward in Iraq. Like most Americans, this administration wants to succeed in Iraq, because we understand success in Iraq would help protect the United States in the long run.



We also talked about the neighborhood, the countries that surround Iraq and the responsibilities that they have to help this young Iraqi democracy survive. We believe that most of the countries understand that a mainstream society, a society that is a functioning democracy, is in their interests. And it's up to us to help focus their attentions and focus their efforts on helping the Iraqis succeed.

I appreciate so very much the Iraqi leadership taking the lead in its neighborhood. After all, one of the things we're trying to do is help this government get on its feet so it can govern and it can conduct its own foreign policy. But the role of America is to help this young democracy survive.

I'm looking forward to continuing my deliberations with the military. There's no question we've got to make sure that the State Department and the Defense Department are -- the efforts and their recommendations are closely coordinated so that when I do speak to the American people, they will know that I've listened to all aspects of government, and that the way forward is the way forward to achieve our objective: to succeed in Iraq. And success is a country that governs, defends itself, that is a free society, that serves as an ally in this war on terror.

And the reason why that's vital is because Iraq is a central component of defeating the extremists who want to establish safe haven in the Middle East, extremists who would use their safe haven from which to attack the United States, extremists and radicals who have stated that they want to topple moderate governments in order to be able to achieve assets necessary to effect their dream of spreading their totalitarian ideology as far and wide as possible.

This is really the calling of our time, that is, to defeat these extremists and radicals, and Iraq is a component part, an important part of laying the foundation for peace.

And so Madam Secretary, thank you for the briefing. I want to thank your team here in Washington for their good work, and I thank those out in the field who have shown such incredible bravery to do the hard work necessary to secure our country.

Thank you all.

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