



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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President Bush Visits and Thanks Troops in Anbar Province

Al-Asad Airbase
Al-Anbar Province, Iraq

 [In Focus: Iraq](#)

9:43 P.M. (Local)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. General, thank you very much. It's an honor to be with you.

 [Video \(Windows\)](#)

 [Presidential Remarks](#)

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As you know, today is Labor Day back home -- (hooah) -- so I thought I'd come by to thank you for all your hard work. (Hooah.) Every day -- every day -- you show bravery under incredibly difficult circumstances. Every day you're doing work on the sands of Anbar that is making it safer in the streets of America. And every day the United States of America is grateful for what you're doing. I want you to tell your families the Commander-in-Chief stopped by to say hello, and he said, I'm incredibly proud to be the Commander-in-Chief of such a great group of men and women. (Applause.)

I'm keeping pretty good company, as you can see. I brought out the A Team so they could be with the folks who are making a significant difference in this war against these radicals and extremists. In Anbar you're seeing firsthand the dramatic differences that can come when the Iraqis are more secure. In other words, you're seeing success.

You see Sunnis who once fought side by side with al Qaeda against coalition troops now fighting side by side with coalition troops against al Qaeda. Anbar is a huge province. It was once written off as lost. It is now one of the safest places in Iraq. (Hooah.) Because of your hard work, because of your bravery and sacrifice, you are denying al Qaeda a safe haven from which to plot and plan and carry out attacks against the United States of America. What you're doing here is making this country safer, and I thank you for your hard work. (Hooah.)



The surge of operations that began in June is improving security throughout Iraq. The military successes are paving the way for the political reconciliation and economic progress the Iraqis need to

transform their country. When Iraqis feel safe in their own homes and neighborhoods, they can focus their efforts on building a stable, civil society with functioning government structures at the local and provincial and national levels. And that's important, because a free Iraq, an Iraq that's an ally against these extremists and murderers will be a major defeat for the terrorists.

Earlier today I met with some of the tribal sheiks here in Anbar. It was a really interesting meeting. And at the table were the leaders of the central government, as well. They told me that the kind of bottom-up progress that your efforts are bringing to Anbar is vital to the success and stability of a free Iraq. See, Iraqis need this stability to build a more peaceful future. And America needs this stability to prevent the chaos that allows the terrorists to set up bases from which they can plot and plan attacks on our homeland.

The very people that you helped the Iraqis defeat in Anbar swore allegiance to the man that ordered the attack on the United States of America. What happens here in Anbar matters to the security of the United States.

And so I thank you for your sacrifice. I thank you for volunteering in the face of danger. I thank you for your courage and your bravery. Every day you are successful here in Iraq draws nearer to the day when America can begin calling you and your fellow servicemen and women home.



But I want to tell you this about the decision -- about my decision about troop levels. Those decisions will be based on a calm assessment by our military commanders on the conditions on the ground -- not a nervous reaction by Washington politicians to poll results in the media. (Hooah.) In other words, when we begin to draw down troops from Iraq, it will be from a position of strength and success, not from a position of fear and failure. To do otherwise would embolden our enemies and make it more likely that they would attack us at home. If we let our enemies back us out of Iraq, we will more likely face them in America. If we don't want to hear their footsteps back home, we have to keep them on their heels over here. And that's exactly what you're doing, and America is safer for it.

In Anbar you're doing this hard work every day. We've all come to say thank you. We've come to tell you the American people are standing with you. They're grateful for your sacrifice. As Commander-in-Chief, I'm proud to be in your presence on this Labor Day. I ask for God's blessings on you and your family, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you. (Applause.)

END 9:49 P.M. (Local)

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