THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

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President Commemorates Veterans Day, Discusses War on Terror

Tobyhanna Army Depot
Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania

- Fact Sheet: Honoring America's Veterans
- In Focus: Honoring Our Veterans

VIDEO Multimedia

President's Remarks

view

11:45 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much. Thank you all for coming, please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. I'm glad to be back in Pennsylvania and I'm proud to be the first sitting President to visit Monroe County. (Applause.) I'm especially pleased to see so many military veterans with us today. Those who have risked their lives for our freedom have the respect and gratitude of our nation on Veterans Day and on every day. (Applause.)

Tobyhanna is a fitting place to commemorate Veterans Day. In the better part of a century, this facility has provided critical services for our armed forces. Around the clock and around the world, personnel from here maintain technology that our troops use to take the fight to the enemy. From Afghanistan to Kuwait to Baghdad International Airport, technicians from Tobyhanna are carrying out dangerous missions with bravery and skill. I know you're proud of them, and so is the Commander-in-Chief. (Applause.)

Tobyhanna is also home to a thriving community of military families. Your support for those who wear the uniform and your support of each other through difficult times brings great pride to our country. The American people stand with our military families. (Applause.)

I want to thank Colonel Ellis for allowing me to come and give you this speech today. Thank you for your service to our country, Colonel Ellis. (Applause.) I want to thank Senator Specter and Congressman Kanjorski and Congressman Sherwood for joining us today. It was good to have them on Air Force One. (Applause.) I appreciate their service to our country. And I want to thank all the state and local officials, and I want to thank all the veterans. (Applause.)

Today, our nation pays tribute to those veterans, 25 million veterans who have worn the uniform of the

United States of America. Each of these men and women took an oath to defend America -- and they upheld that oath with honor and decency. Through the generations, they have humbled dictators and liberated continents and set a standard of courage and idealism for the entire world. This year, 3.5 million veterans celebrate the 60th anniversary of freedom's great victory in World War II. A handful of veterans who live among us in 2005 stood in uniform when World War I ended 87 years ago today. These men are more than a hundred years old, many of their lives have touched three different centuries, and they can all know that America will be proud of their service. (Applause.)

On Veterans Day, we also remember the troops who left America's shores but did not live to be thanked as veterans. On this Veterans Day, we honor the courage of those who were lost in the current struggle. We think of the families who lost a loved one; we pray for their comfort. And we remember the men and women in uniform whose fate is still undetermined -- our prisoners of war and those missing in action. America must never forget their courage. And we will not stop searching until we have accounted for every soldier and sailor and airman and Marines missing in the line of duty. (Applause.)

All of America's veterans have placed the nation's security before their own lives. Their sacrifice creates a debt that America can never fully repay. Yet, there are certain things that government can do; my administration remains firmly committed to serving America's veterans. (Applause.)

Since I took office, my administration has increased spending for veterans by $24 billion -- an increase of 53 percent. (Applause.) In the first four years as President, we increased spending for veterans more than twice as much as the previous administration did in eight years, and I want to thank the members of the Congress and the Senate for joining me in the effort to support our veterans. (Applause.)

We've increased the VA's medical care budget by 51 percent, increased total outpatient visits, increased the number of prescriptions filled, and reduced the backlog of disability claims. We've committed more than $1.5 billion to modernizing and expanding VA facilities so that more veterans can get better care closer to home. We've expanded grants to help homeless veterans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, because we strongly believe no veteran who served in the blazing heat or bitter cold of foreign lands should have to live without shelter in this country. (Applause.)

I've joined with the veterans groups to call on Congress to protect the flag of the United States in the Constitution of the United States. (Applause.) In June, the House of Representatives voted for a constitutional amendment to ban flag desecration. I urge the United States Senate to pass this important amendment. (Applause.)

At this hour, a new generation of Americans is defending our flag and our freedom in the first war of the 21st century. The war came to our shores on September the 11th, 2001. That morning, we saw the destruction that terrorists intend for our nation. We know that they want to strike again. And our nation

has made a clear choice: We will confront this mortal danger to all humanity; we will not tire or rest until the war on terror is won. (Applause.)

In the four years since September the 11th, the evil that reached our shores has reappeared on other days, in other places -- in Mombasa and Casablanca and Riyadh and Jakarta and Istanbul and Madrid and Beslan and Taba and Netanya and Baghdad, and elsewhere. In the past few months, we have seen a new terror offensive with attacks on London and Sharm el-Sheikh, another deadly strike in Bali, and this week, a series of bombings in Amman, Jordan, that killed dozens of innocent Jordanians and their guests.

All these separate images of destruction and suffering that we see on the news can seem like random, isolated acts of madness -- innocent men and women and children who have died simply because they boarded the wrong train, or worked in the wrong building, or checked into the wrong hotel. Yet, while the killers choose their victims indiscriminately, their attacks serve a clear and focused ideology -- a set of beliefs and goals that are evil, but not insane.

Some call this evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant Jihadism; and still others, Islamo-fascism. Whatever it's called, this ideology is very different from the 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. These extremists distort the idea of jihad into a call for terrorist murder against Christians and Hindus and Jews -- and against Muslims, themselves, who do not share their radical vision.

Many militants are part of a global, borderless terrorist organization like al Qaeda -- which spreads propaganda, and provides financing and technical assistance to local extremists, and conducts dramatic and brutal operations like the attacks of September the 11th. Other militants are found in regional groups, often associated with al Qaeda -- paramilitary insurgencies and separatist movements in places like Somalia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Chechnya, Kashmir and Algeria. Still others spring up in local cells -- inspired by Islamic radicalism, but not centrally directed. Islamic radicalism is more like a loose network with many branches than an army under a single command. Yet these operatives, fighting on scattered battlefields, share a similar ideology and vision for the world.

We know the vision of the radicals because they have openly stated it -- in videos and audiotapes and letters and declarations and on websites.

First, 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. Al Qaeda's leader, Osama bin Laden, has called on Muslims to dedicate, their "resources, their sons and money to driving the infidels out of our lands." The tactics of al Qaeda and other Islamic extremists have been consistent for a quarter of a century: They hit us, and expect us to run.

Last month, the world learned of a letter written by al Qaeda's number two leader, a guy named Zawahiri. And 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. This is what he said: "The aftermath of the collapse of American power in Vietnam -- and how they ran and left their agents -- is noteworthy." The terrorists witnessed a similar response after the attacks on American troops in Beirut in 1983 and Mogadishu in 1993. They believe that America can be made to run again -- only this time on a larger scale, with greater consequences.

Second, the militant network wants to use the vacuum created by an American retreat to gain control of a country -- a base from which to launch attacks and 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 takeover. They achieved their goal, for a time, in Afghanistan. And now they've set their sights on Iraq. In his recent letter, Zawahiri writes that al Qaeda views Iraq as, "the place for the greatest battle." The terrorists regard Iraq as the central front in their war against humanity. We must recognize Iraq as the central front in our war against the terrorists. (Applause.)

Third, these militants believe that controlling one country will rally the Muslim masses, enabling them to overthrow all moderate governments in the region, and establish a radical Islamic empire that spans from Spain to Indonesia. Zawahiri writes that the terrorists, "must not have their mission end with the expulsion of the Americans from Iraq." He goes on to say: "[T]he jihad ... requires several incremental goals. ... Expel the Americans from Iraq. ... Establish an Islamic authority over as much territory as you can to spread its power in Iraqo Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq."

With the greater economic, military and political power they seek, the terrorists would be able to advance their stated agenda: to develop weapons of mass destruction; to destroy Israel; to intimidate Europe; to assault the American people; and to blackmail our government into isolation.

Some might be tempted to dismiss these goals as fanatical or extreme. They are fanatical and extreme -- but they should not be dismissed. Our enemy is utterly committed. As Zarqawi has vowed, "We will either achieve victory over the human race or we will pass to the eternal life." (Applause.) And the civilized world knows very well that other fanatics in history, from Hitler to Stalin to Pol Pot, consumed whole nations in war and genocide before leaving the stage of history. Evil men, obsessed with ambition and unburdened by conscience, must be taken very seriously -- and we must stop them before their crimes can multiply.

Defeating the militant network is difficult, because it thrives, like a parasite, on the suffering and frustration of others. The radicals exploit local conflicts to build a culture of victimization, in which someone else is always to blame and violence is always the solution. They exploit resentful and disillusioned young men and women, recruiting them through radical mosques as pawns of terror. And they exploit modern technology to multiply their destructive power. Instead of attending far-away

training camps, recruits can now access online training libraries to learn how to build a roadside bomb or fire a rocket-propelled grenade -- and this further spreads the threat of violence, even within peaceful democratic societies.

The influence of Islamic radicalism is also magnified by helpers and enablers. They've been sheltered by authoritarian regimes -- allies of convenience like Iran and Syria -- that share the goal of hurting America and modern Muslim governments, and use terrorist propaganda to blame their own failures on the West, on America, and on the Jews. This week the government of Syria took two disturbing steps. First, it arrested Dr. Kamal Labwani for serving as an advocate for democratic reform. Then President Assad delivered a strident speech that attacked both the Lebanese government and the integrity of the Mehlis investigation into the assassination of Lebanon's former prime minister.

The government of Syria must do what the international community has demanded: cooperate fully with the Mehlis investigation and stop trying to intimidate and de-stabilize the Lebanese government. The government of Syria must stop exporting violence and start importing democracy. (Applause.)

The radicals depend on front operations, such as corrupted charities, which direct money to terrorist activity. They are strengthened by those who aggressively fund the spread of radical, intolerant versions of Islam into unstable parts of the world. The militants are aided as well by elements of the Arab news media that incite hatred and anti-Semitism, that feed conspiracy theories, and speak of a so-called American "war on Islam" -- with seldom a word about American action to protect Muslims in Afghanistan and Bosnia and Somalia and Kosovo and Kuwait and Iraq; or our generous assistance to Muslims recovering from natural disasters in places like Indonesia and Pakistan. (Applause.)

Some have also argued that extremism has been strengthened by the actions in Iraq -- claiming that our presence in that country has somehow caused or triggered the rage of radicals. I would remind them that we were not in Iraq on September the 11th, 2001. (Applause.) The hatred of the radicals existed before Iraq was an issue, and it will exist after Iraq is no longer an excuse. The government of Russia did not support Operation Iraqi Freedom -- and, yet, the militants killed more than 150 Russian schoolchildren in Beslan.

Over the years these extremists have used a litany of excuses for violence: the Israeli presence on the West Bank, the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia, the defeat of the Taliban, or the Crusades of a thousand years ago. In fact, we're not facing a set of grievances that can be soothed and addressed. We're facing a radical ideology with inalterable objectives: to enslave whole nations and intimidate the world. No act of ours invited the rage of killers -- and no concession, bribe, or act of appeasement would change or limit their plans for murder. On the contrary, they target nations whose behavior they believe they can change through violence. Against such an enemy, there is only one effective response: We will never back down, we will never give in, we will never accept anything less than complete victory. (Applause.)

The murderous ideology of the Islamic radicals is the great challenge of our new century. Yet in many ways, this fight resembles the struggle against communism in the last century. Like the ideology of communism, Islamic radicalism is elitist, led by a self-appointed vanguard that presumes to speak for the Muslim masses. Bin Laden says his own role is to tell Muslims, "what is good for them and what is

not." And what this man who grew up in wealth and privilege considers good for poor Muslims is that they become killers and suicide bombers. He assures them that this road -- that this is the road to paradise -- though he never offers to go along for the ride. (Applause.)

Like the ideology of communism, our new enemy teaches that innocent individuals can be sacrificed to serve a political vision. And this explains their cold-blooded contempt for human life. We have seen it in the murders of Daniel Pearl and Nicholas Berg and Margaret Hassan and many others. In a courtroom in the Netherlands, the killer of Theo Van Gogh turned to the victim's grieving mother and said, "I don't feel your pain ... because I believe you're an infidel." And in spite of this veneer of religious rhetoric, most of the victims claimed by the militants are fellow Muslims.

Recently, in the town of Huwaydar, Iraq, a terrorist detonated a pickup truck parked along a busy street lined with restaurants and shops, just as residents were gathering to break the day-long fast observed during Ramadan. The explosion killed at least 25 people and wounded 34. When unsuspecting Muslims breaking their Ramadan fast are targeted for death, or 25 Iraqi children are killed in a bombing, or Iraqi teachers are executed at their school, this is murder, pure and simple -- the total rejection of justice and honor and morality and religion. (Applause.)

These militants are not just the enemies of America or the enemies of Iraq, they are the enemies of Islam and they are the enemies of humanity. And we have seen this kind of shameless cruelty before -- in the heartless zealotry that led to the gulags, the Cultural Revolution, and the killing fields.

Like the ideology of communism, our new enemy pursues totalitarian aims. Its leaders pretend to be an aggrieved party, representing the powerless against imperial enemies. In truth, they have endless ambitions of imperial domination -- and they wish to make everyone powerless, except themselves. Under their rule, they have banned books, and desecrated historical monuments, and brutalized women. They seek to end dissent in every form, to control every aspect of life, to rule the soul itself. While promising a future of justice and holiness, the terrorists are preparing a future of oppression and misery.

Like the ideology of communism, our new enemy is dismissive of free peoples -- claiming that men and women who live in liberty are weak and decadent. Zarqawi has said that Americans are, "the most cowardly of God's creatures." But let us be clear: It is cowardice that seeks to kill children and the elderly with car bombs, and cuts the throat of a bound captive, and targets worshipers leaving a mosque.

It is courage that liberated more than 50 million people from tyranny. It is courage that keeps an untiring vigil against the enemies of rising democracies. And it is courage in the cause of freedom that will once again destroy the enemies of freedom. (Applause.)

And Islamic radicalism, like the ideology of communism, contains inherent contradictions that doom it to failure. By fearing freedom -- by distrusting human creativity and punishing change and limiting the contributions of half a population -- this ideology undermines the very qualities that make human progress possible, and human societies successful. The only thing modern about the militants' vision is the weapons they want to use against us. The rest of their grim vision is defined by a warped image of

the past -- a declaration of war on the idea of progress itself. And whatever lies ahead in the war against this ideology, the outcome is not in doubt. Those who despise freedom and progress have condemned themselves to isolation and decline and collapse. Because free peoples believe in the future, free peoples will own the future. (Applause.)

We didn't ask for this global struggle, but we're answering history's call with confidence, and with a comprehensive strategy. Defeating a broad and adaptive network requires patience, constant pressure, and strong partners in Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa and Asia and beyond. Working with these partners, we're disrupting militant conspiracies, we're destroying their ability to make war, and we're working to give millions in a troubled region a hopeful alternative to resentment and violence.

First, we're determined to prevent attacks of the terrorist networks before they occur. We are reorganizing our government to give this nation a broad and coordinated homeland defense. We're reforming our intelligence agencies for the incredibly difficult task of tracking enemy activity -- based on information that often comes in small fragments from widely scattered sources, both here and abroad. And we're acting, along with governments from other countries, to destroy the terrorist networks and incapacitate their leadership.

Together with our partners, we've disrupted a number of serious al Qaeda terrorist plots since September the 11th -- including several plots to attack inside the United States. Our coalition against terror has 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 serious deputies, al Qaeda managers and operatives in more than 24 countries; the mastermind of the USS Cole bombing, who was chief of al Qaeda's operations in the Persian Gulf; the mastermind of the bombings in Jakarta and Bali; a senior Zarqawi terrorist planner, who was planning attacks in Turkey; and many of their senior leaders in Saudi Arabia.

Because of this steady progress, the enemy is wounded -- but the enemy is still capable of global operations. Our commitment is clear: We will not relent until the organized international terror networks 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. (Applause.) The United States, working with Great Britain and Pakistan and other nations, has 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 in the past 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. This progress has reduced the danger to free nations, but it has not removed it. Evil men who want to use horrendous weapons against us are working in deadly earnest to gain them. And we're working urgently to keep the weapons of mass murder out of the hands of the fanatics.

Third, we're determined to deny radical groups the support and sanctuary of outlaw regimes. State

sponsors like Syria and Iran have a long history of collaboration with terrorists, and they deserve no patience from the victims of terror. The United States makes no distinction between those who commit acts of terror and those who support and harbor them, because they're equally guilty of murder. (Applause.)

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 our armed forces. American troops are fighting beside Afghan partners and against remnants of the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies. We're working with President Musharraf to oppose and isolate the militants in Pakistan. We're fighting the regime remnants and terrorists in Iraq. The terrorist goal is to overthrow a rising democracy, claim a strategic country as a haven for terror, destabilize the Middle East, and strike America and other free nations with increasing violence. Our goal is to defeat the terrorists and their allies at the heart of their power, so we will defeat the enemy in Iraq. (Applause.)

Our coalition, along with our Iraqi allies, is moving forward with a comprehensive plan. Our strategy is to clear, hold, and build. We're working to clear areas from terrorist control, to hold those areas securely, and to build lasting, democratic Iraqi institutions through an increasingly inclusive political process. In recent weeks, American and Iraqi troops have conducted several major assaults to clear out enemy fighters in Baghdad, and parts of Iraq.

Two weeks ago, in Operation Clean Sweep, Iraq and coalition forces raided 350 houses south of Baghdad, capturing more than 40 of the terrorist killers. Acting on tips from local citizens, our forces have recently launched air strikes against terrorist safe houses in and around the towns of Ubaydi and Husaybah. We brought to justice two key senior al Qaeda terrorist leaders. And in Mosul, coalition forces killed an al Qaeda cell leader named Muslet, who was personally involved in at least three videotaped beheadings. We're on the hunt. We're keeping pressure on the enemy. (Applause.)

And thousands of Iraqi forces have been participating in these operations, and even more Iraqis are joining the fight. Last month, nearly 3,000 Iraqi police officers graduated from 10 weeks of basic training. They'll now take their places along other brave Iraqis who are taking the fight to the terrorists across their own country. Iraqi police and security forces are helping to clear terrorists from their strongholds, helping to hold onto areas that we've cleared; they're working to prevent the enemy from returning. Iraqi forces are using their local expertise to maintain security, and to build political and economic institutions that will help improve the lives of their fellow citizens.

At the same time, Iraqis are making inspiring progress toward building a democracy. Last month, millions of Iraqis turned out to vote, and they approved a new constitution that guarantees fundamental freedoms and lays the foundation for lasting democracy. Many more Sunnis participated in this vote than in January's historic elections, and the level of violence was lower.

Now, Iraqis are gearing up for December 15th elections, when they will go to the polls to choose a government under the new constitution. The new government will serve a four-year term, and it will represent all Iraqis. Even those who voted against the constitution are now organizing and preparing for the December elections. Multiple Sunni Arab parties have submitted a list of candidates, and several prominent Sunni politicians are running on other slates. With two successful elections

completed, and a third coming up next month, the Iraqi people are proving their determination to build a democracy united against extremism and violence. (Applause.)

The work ahead involves great risk for Iraqis and for American and coalition forces. We've lost some of our nation's finest men and women in this war on terror. Each of these men and women left grieving families and left loved ones at home. Each of these patriots left a legacy that will allow generations of fellow Americans to enjoy the blessings of liberty. Each loss of life is heartbreaking. And the best way to honor the sacrifice of our fallen troops is to complete the mission and to lay the foundation of peace for generations to come. (Applause.)

The terrorists are as brutal an enemy as we've ever faced, unconstrained by any notion of our common humanity or by the rules of warfare. No one should underestimate the difficulties ahead, nor should they overlook the advantages we bring to this fight.

Some observers look at the job ahead and adopt a self-defeating pessimism. It is not justified. With every random bombing, with every funeral of a child, it becomes more clear that the extremists are not patriots or resistance fighters -- they're murderers at war with the Iraqi people themselves.

In contrast, the elected leaders of Iraq are proving to be strong and steadfast. By any standard or precedent of history, Iraq has made incredible political progress -- from tyranny, to liberation, to national elections, to the ratification of a constitution -- in the space of two-and-a-half years. (Applause.)

I have said, as Iraqis stand up, Americans will stand down. And with our help, the Iraqi military is gaining new capabilities and new confidence with each passing month. At the time of our Fallujah operations a year ago, there were only a few Iraqi army battalions in combat. Today, there are nearly 90 Iraqi army battalions fighting the terrorists alongside our forces. (Applause.) General David Petraeus says, "Iraqis are in the fight. They're fighting and dying for their country, and they're fighting increasingly well." This progress is not easy, but it is steady. And no fair-minded person should ignore, deny, or dismiss the achievements of the Iraqi people. (Applause.)

And our debate at home must also be fair-minded. One of the hallmarks of a free society and what makes our country strong is that our political leaders can discuss their differences openly, even in times of war. When I made the decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power, Congress approved it with strong bipartisan support. I also recognize that some of our fellow citizens and elected officials didn't support the liberation of Iraq. And that is their right, and I respect it. As President and Commander-in-Chief, I accept the responsibilities, and the criticisms, and the consequences that come with such a solemn decision.

While it's perfectly legitimate to criticize my decision or the conduct of the war, it is deeply irresponsible to rewrite the history of how that war began. (Applause.) Some Democrats and anti-war critics are now claiming we manipulated the intelligence and misled the American people about why we went to war. These critics are fully aware that a bipartisan Senate investigation found no evidence of political pressure to change the intelligence community's judgments related to Iraq's weapons programs.

They also know that intelligence agencies from around the world agreed with our assessment of Saddam Hussein. They know the United Nations passed more than a dozen resolutions citing his development and possession of weapons of mass destruction. And many of these critics supported my opponent during the last election, who explained his position to support the resolution in the Congress this way: "When I vote to give the President of the United States the authority to use force, if necessary, to disarm Saddam Hussein, it is because I believe that a deadly arsenal of weapons of mass destruction in his hands is a threat, and a grave threat, to our security." That's why more than a hundred Democrats in the House and the Senate -- who had access to the same intelligence -- voted to support removing Saddam Hussein from power. (Applause.)

The stakes in the global war on terror are too high, and the national interest is too important, for politicians to throw out false charges. (Applause.) These baseless attacks send the wrong signal to our troops and to an enemy that is questioning America's will. As our troops fight a ruthless enemy determined to destroy our way of life, they deserve to know that their elected leaders who voted to send them to war continue to stand behind them. (Applause.) Our troops deserve to know that this support will remain firm when the going gets tough. (Applause.) And our troops deserve to know that whatever our differences in Washington, our will is strong, our nation is united, and we will settle for nothing less than victory. (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. This is difficult, and it's a long-term project, yet there is no alternative to it. Our future and the future of the region are linked. If the broader Middle East is left to grow in bitterness, if countries remain in misery while radicals stir the resentment of millions, then that part of the world will be a source of endless conflict and mounting danger, in our generation and for the next.

If the peoples of that region are permitted to choose their own destiny, and advance by their own energy and participation of 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. By standing for hope and freedom of others, we make our own freedom more secure.

America is making this stand in practical ways. We're encouraging our friends in the Middle East, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to take the path of reform, to strengthen their own societies in the fight against terror by respecting the rights and choices of their own people. We're standing with dissidents and exiles against oppressive regimes, because we know that the dissidents of today will be the democratic leaders of tomorrow. We're making our case through public diplomacy -- stating clearly and confidently our belief in self-determination, and the rule of law, and religious freedom, and equal rights for women -- beliefs that are right and true in every land and in every culture. (Applause.)

As we do our part to confront radicalism and to protect the United States, we know that a lot of vital work will be done within the Islamic world itself. And the work is beginning. Many Muslim scholars have already publicly condemned terrorism, often citing Chapter 5, Verse 32 of the Koran, which states that killing an innocent human being is like killing all of humanity, and saving the life of one person is like saving all humanity. (Applause.) After the attacks July -- on July 7th in London, an imam in the United Arab Emirates declared, "Whoever does such a thing is not a Muslim, nor a religious person." The time has come for responsible Islamic leaders to join in denouncing an ideology that exploits Islam for

political ends, and defiles a noble faith. (Applause.)

Many people of the Muslim faith are proving their commitment at great personal risk. Everywhere we've engaged the fight against extremism, Muslim allies have stood up and joined the fight, becoming partners in this vital cause. Afghan troops are in combat against Taliban remnants. Iraqi soldiers are sacrificing to defeat al Qaeda in their country. These brave citizens know the stakes -- the survival of their own liberty, the future of their own region, the justice and humanity of their own tradition -- and the United States of America is proud to stand beside them. (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 of 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 do know the love of freedom is the mightiest force of history, and we do know the cause of freedom will once again prevail. (Applause.)

Thank you for coming. May God bless our veterans, may God bless our troops in harm's way, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. (Applause.)

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