



For Immediate Release
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Setting the Record Straight: Targeting Al Qaeda

President Bush Discussed The Importance Of Defeating Al Qaeda In Iraq In More Than 40 Public Appearances This Year

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"President Bush has consistently argued that Iraq is the central front in the War on Terror. Al Qaeda leaders describe it the same way, which is why they are trying to use murder and mayhem to provoke sectarian violence, foment chaos, and create a safe haven for terror. Defeating al Qaeda has been central to our new strategy in Iraq from day one and will continue to be."

- White House Press Secretary Tony Snow, 7/25/07

CBS News Says President Bush's Rationale For War In Iraq Is "New," "Clearly Shifting," And "A Clear Contradiction Of" His January 10 Address To The Nation

CBS's "Evening News": KATIE COURIC: "President Bush appealed again today for more time for his Iraq strategy to work, but this time with a new rationale." JIM AXELROD: "...President Bush's rationale is clearly shifting from policing sectarian violence to targeting al Qaeda ... the President linked Al Qaeda terrorists in Iraq directly to Osama Bin Laden ... But this is a clear contradiction of the January speech setting limits on US involvement." (CBS's "Evening News," 7/24/07)

President Bush Is Not "Shifting" His Rationale "From Policing Sectarian Violence To Targeting Al Qaeda"

Yesterday, The President Said One Reason The Intelligence Community Judges Al Qaeda In Iraq To Be So Dangerous Is That They Aim To "Accelerate Sectarian Violence." THE PRESIDENT: "But our intelligence community believes that al Qaeda is the most dangerous of these Sunni jihadist groups for several reasons: First, more than any other group, al Qaeda is behind most of the spectacular, high-casualty attacks that you see on your TV screens. Second, these al Qaeda attacks are designed to accelerate sectarian violence, by attacking Shia in hopes of sparking reprisal attacks that inspire Sunnis to join al Qaeda's cause." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On The Global War On Terror, Charleston, SC, 7/24/07)

The President Was Not Laying Out A "New" Rationale From January. He Discussed The Al Qaeda In Iraq Threat On January 10 And In More Than 40 Public Appearances Since:

January 10: "Al Qaeda is still active in Iraq. ... America's men and women in uniform took away al Qaeda's safe haven in Afghanistan – and we will not allow them to re-establish it in Iraq." (President George W. Bush, Address To The Nation, The White House, 1/10/07)

January 11: "It's important for the American people to understand al Qaeda still is in Iraq. ... These are the same folks that came and killed about 3,000 of our citizens. Their goal in Iraq is to topple the government, topple democracy." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To Military Personnel And Families, Fort Benning, GA, 1/11/07)

January 13: "... America will step up the fight against al Qaeda in its home base in Iraq – Anbar province." (President George W. Bush, Radio Address To The Nation, 1/13/07)

January 16: "It's important for the American people to understand it is al Qaeda that is doing a lot of these spectacular bombings. Why? Because they want a safe haven. They still have ambitions about hurting America." (President George W. Bush, Interview With PBS's Jim Lehrer, 1/16/07)

January 23: "We didn't drive al Qaeda out of their safe haven in Afghanistan only to let them set up a new safe haven in a free Iraq." (President George W. Bush, State Of The Union Address, Washington, DC, 1/23/07)

January 29: "And the violence is caused by Sunni Arabs, like al Qaeda, who have made it clear that they want to create chaos and drive the United States out so they can have safe haven, and then they could launch attacks against America." (NPR's "Morning Edition," 1/29/07)

February 12: "You'll see a society that I just described ... one which rejects extremism and violence and does not allow a group like al Qaeda to find safe haven within their borders." (President George W. Bush, Interview With C-SPAN's Steve Scully, 2/12/07)

February 14: "There is an al Qaeda presence in Iraq, as you know. I believe some of the spectacular bombings have been caused by al Qaeda." (President George W. Bush, Press Conference, The White House, 2/14/07)

March 6: "This strategy is going to take time. And we can expect al Qaeda and other extremists to try to derail the strategy by launching spectacular attacks." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To The American Legion, Washington, D.C., 3/6/07)

March 19: "Together, we've carried out aggressive operations against both Shia and Sunni extremists; carried out operations against al Qaeda terrorists. We've uncovered large caches of weapons and destroyed two major car bomb factories that were located on the outskirts of Baghdad." (President George W. Bush, Statement On The 4th Anniversary Of The Invasion Of Iraq, The White House, 3/19/07)

March 28: "It's interesting, I mentioned al Qaeda; al Qaeda wants us to fail in Iraq. This is what their leaders have clearly said, and they're willing to kill innocent women and children to achieve their objectives." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To The National Cattleman's Beef Association, Washington, D.C., 3/28/07)

April 4: "We're after al Qaeda. After all, al Qaeda wants us to fail because they can't stand the thought of a free society in their midst." (President George W. Bush, Remarks, Fort Irwin, CA, 4/4/07)

April 10: "A minority – and I emphasize 'minority' – of violent extremists have declared that they want to turn that country into a terrorist base from which to launch an ideological war in the Middle East and attacks on the United States of America. That is the stated objective of al Qaeda in Iraq." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On The Iraq War Supplemental, Fairfax, VA, 4/10/07)

April 19: "Our objective is to deny them safe haven, is to prevent al Qaeda from being able to do in Iraq that which they did in Afghanistan, which is where they trained thousands of young men to come and kill – to eventually kill innocent people." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On The Global War On Terror, Tipp City, OH, 4/19/07)

April 20: "It's important for all Iraqis – Sunnis and Shia alike – to understand that al Qaeda is the greatest threat to peace in their country. And the question is whether we and the Iraqis will give in, and to respond the way al Qaeda wants." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On The Global War On Terror, East Grand Rapids, MI, 4/20/07)

April 24: "We know what could happen next. Just as al Qaeda used Afghanistan as a base to plan attacks of September the 11th, al Qaeda could make Iraq a base to plan even more deadly attacks." (President George W. Bush, Statement On The Iraq War Supplemental, The White House, 4/24/07)

April 25: "Look, he's deeply concerned about al Qaeda influence. I believe that most of these spectacular bombings we're seeing are – have the hallmark of al Qaeda. They understand that a free Iraq is not in their interest." (PBS's "The Charlie Rose Show," 4/25/07)

May 1: "Our main enemy is al Qaeda and its affiliates. Their allies choose their victims indiscriminately. They murder the innocent to advance a focused and clear ideology." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To CENTCOM Coalition Conference, Tampa, FL, 5/1/07)

May 1: "These attacks are largely the work of al Qaeda – the enemy that everyone agrees we should be fighting. The objective of these al Qaeda attacks is to subvert our efforts by reigniting the sectarian violence in Baghdad – and breaking support for the war here at home." (President George W. Bush, Statement On The Iraq War Supplemental, The White House, 5/1/07)

May 2: "The primary reason for the high level of violence is this: al Qaeda has ratcheted up its campaign of high-profile attacks, including deadly suicide bombers carried out by foreign

terrorists." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To The Associated General Contractors Of America, Washington, D.C., 5/2/07)

May 5: "The al Qaeda terrorists who behead captives or order suicide bombings would not be satisfied to see America defeated and gone from Iraq. They would be emboldened by their victory, protected by their new sanctuary, eager to impose their hateful vision on surrounding countries, and eager to harm Americans." (President George W. Bush, Radio Address To The Nation, 5/5/07)

May 10: "As we have surged our forces, al Qaeda is responding with their own surge. Al Qaeda is ratcheting up its campaign of high-profile attacks, including deadly suicide bombings carried out by foreign terrorists." (President George W. Bush, Statement After U.S. Department Of Defense Briefings, The Pentagon, 5/10/07)

May 10: "The enemy we face in Iraq is a multifaceted enemy. But the enemy that's causing the car bombs, the enemy that is causing the spectacular deaths of the innocent is al Qaeda, the very same people that launched the attacks that killed nearly 3,000 citizens on our soul – soil." (President George W. Bush, Remarks At The Republican National Committee Gala, 5/10/07)

May 21: "And al Qaeda, in particular, will be emboldened. I'm giving a speech on Wednesday reminding people al Qaeda is public enemy number one in Iraq and is public enemy number one for America." (President George W. Bush, Interview With *Reuters'* Steve Holland, 5/21/07)

May 23: "Bin Laden is matching his words with action. He attempted to send a new commander to Iraq, an Iraqi-born terrorist named Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi. According to our intelligence community, this terrorist had been a senior advisor to bin Laden, he served as his top commander in Afghanistan, he was responsible for all al Qaeda's military operations against our coalition in that country." (President George W. Bush, Remarks At The United States Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT, 5/23/07)

May 24: "[A]l Qaeda fully understands that if we retreat they, then, are able to have another safe haven, in their mind. Yesterday, in my speech, I quoted quotes from Osama bin Laden. And the reason I did was, is that I want the American people to hear what he has to say..." (President George W. Bush, Press Conference, The White House, 5/24/07)

May 30: "Many of the spectacular bombings you see are inspired and done by al Qaeda. As General Petraeus said, public enemy number one in Iraq is al Qaeda; public enemy number one in the United States of America is al Qaeda. We must defeat al Qaeda there so we don't have to face them here." (President George W. Bush, Remarks At The New Jersey Republican Committee Reception, Lakewood, NJ, 5/30/07)

May 31: "David Petraeus said, public enemy number one in Iraq is al Qaeda. Al Qaeda happens to be public enemy number one in America, too. And that should say loud and clear to citizens who still remember the lessons of September the 11th that it's in our interest to help the Iraqis defeat al Qaeda." (President George W. Bush, Remarks With Iraq President Jalal Talabani, The White House, 5/31/07)

June 6: "What's difficult is the fact that al Qaeda continues to kill. And it frustrates the Iraqi people, and it should frighten the American people that al Qaeda is active in Iraq looking for a safe haven from which to launch further attacks." (President George W. Bush, Remarks In Roundtable With Travel Pool, Heiligendamm, Germany, 6/6/07)

June 13: "It is interesting that David Petraeus, our commander on the ground, has declared that al Qaeda is the number-one enemy to the people of Iraq. Well, al Qaeda also happens to be the number one enemy to the people of the United States. And what does that tell you? It tells you that you've got to succeed." (President George W. Bush, Remarks At 2007 President's Dinner, Washington, D.C. 6/13/07)

June 14: "If we withdraw before the Iraqi government can defend itself, we would leave a dangerous security vacuum, which extremist forces, like al Qaeda, would compete to fill." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To The Associated Builders And Contractors, Washington, D.C., 6/14/07)

June 19: "Al Qaeda, the people that killed nearly 3,000 of our people here in the United States, are conducting major car bombs and acts of unspeakable violence in Iraq, trying to drive us out, because they want to impose their vision on the Iraqi people." (President George W. Bush, Remarks With Israel Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, The White House, 6/19/07)

June 21: "Most of the suicide bombings and the most horrific of bombings are perpetrated on the Iraqi people by al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is the same bunch that attacked us on September the 11th and killed nearly 3,000 people." (President George W. Bush, Remarks At Friends Of Jeff Sessions Senate Committee Reception, Mobile, AL, 6/21/07)

June 28: "To the west and northwest of Baghdad, Operation Phantom Thunder is going after al Qaeda's remaining outposts in Anbar. We're taking the fight to areas around Karmah – it's a known transit point for al Qaeda fighters." (President George W. Bush, Remarks At The Naval War College, Newport, RI, 6/28/07)

June 30: "We're engaging the enemy, and killing or capturing hundreds. Just this week, our commanders reported the killing of two senior al Qaeda leaders north of Baghdad." (President George W. Bush, Radio Address To The Nation, 6/30/07)

July 4: "Many of the spectacular car bombings and killings you see are as a result of al Qaeda – the very same folks that attacked us on September the 11th. A major enemy in Iraq is the same enemy that dared attack the United States on that fateful day." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To The West Virginia Air National Guard, Martinsburg, WV, 7/4/07)

July 10: "[A]l Qaeda is doing most of the spectacular bombings, trying to incite sectarian violence. The same people that attacked us on September the 11th is the crowd that is now bombing people, killing innocent men, women and children, many of whom are Muslims, trying to stop the advance of a system based upon liberty." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To The Greater Cleveland Partnership, Cleveland, OH, 7/10/07)

July 12: "[A]l Qaeda in Iraq, has sworn allegiance to Osama bin Laden. And we need to take al Qaeda in Iraq seriously, just like we need to take al Qaeda anywhere in the world seriously." (President George W. Bush, Press Conference, The White House, 7/12/07)

July 14: "To begin to bring troops home before our commanders tell us we are ready would be dangerous for our country. It would mean surrendering the future of Iraq to al Qaeda, risking a humanitarian catastrophe, and allowing the terrorists to establish a safe haven in Iraq and gain control of vast oil resources they could use to fund new attacks on America." (President George W. Bush, Radio Address To The Nation, 7/14/07)

July 16: "And the struggle is playing out in Iraq – where al Qaeda, insurgents, and militia are trying to defy the will of nearly 12 million Iraqis who voted for a free future." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On The Middle East, The White House, 7/16/07)

July 19: "[P]eople ask me, are these really al Qaeda? Well, they have sworn allegiance to Osama bin Laden; what else are they? They are cold-blooded killers who have declared publicly that they would like to drive us out of Iraq to develop a safe haven from which to launch further attacks." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On The Budget, Nashville, TN, 7/19/07)

July 24: "Al Qaeda in Iraq is a group founded by foreign terrorists, led largely by foreign terrorists, and loyal to a foreign terrorist leader – Osama bin Laden. They know they're al Qaeda. The Iraqi people know they are al Qaeda. People across the Muslim world know they are al Qaeda. And there's a good reason they are called al Qaeda in Iraq: They are al Qaeda ... in ... Iraq." (President George W. Bush, Remarks On The Global War On Terror, Charleston, SC, 7/24/07)

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