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## President Bush Discusses Global War on Terror in Las Vegas, Nevada

Emerald at Queensridge  
Las Vegas, Nevada

9:30 A.M. PST

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for the warm welcome. Thank you. So what Ranson didn't tell you is he believes in free speech, and that's what I'm here to give. (Laughter.) I appreciate the invitation. (Laughter.)

 [Video \(Windows\)](#)

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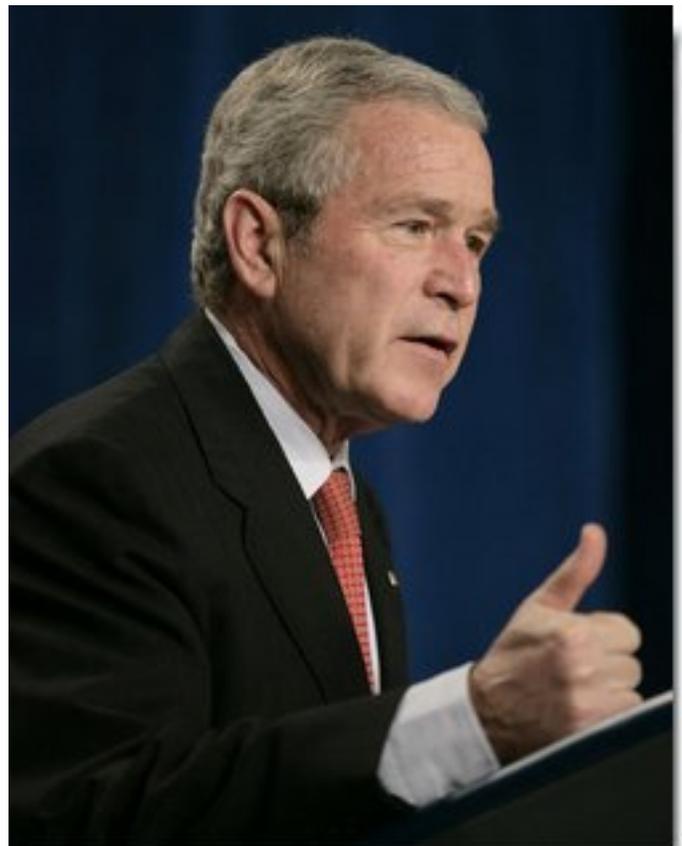
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Sharon, thank you very much, as well. I'm honored to be here with the Governor. Governor -- the Governor has been a friend of mine for a long time. We served together in Washington. He came back to Nevada -- (laughter) -- to serve the great state. (Applause.) As my wife said, when you get over there don't mispronounce it again. (Laughter.) I learned my lesson. But Governor, thank you for being here. I appreciate all the state and local officials who are here, and I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by and share some thoughts about the world in which we live.

I do appreciate very much your advocacy of open markets, ownership. I believe the ownership society is necessary for a hopeful America. We want people owning their homes. We want people owning and managing their own health care accounts. We want people managing their pension plans. We ought to trust people. And at my State of the Union, one of the themes at the State of the Union was that government ought to trust people and empower them to make their own decisions about their future. And this Institute does that, and I appreciate it very much. I thank you for being on the forefront of good, optimistic thought.

The world in which we live is a dangerous world, but a world full of great opportunity. We're involved in an ideological struggle -- the likes of which we have seen before in our history. It's an ideological struggle between those of us who love freedom and human rights and human dignity, and those who want to impose their dark



vision on how people should live their lives. This is a -- [REDACTED]  
not a political conflict -- I mean, a religious conflict. And I'll tell you why: because one of the tactics, and the main tactic of those enemies of freedom, is to murder the innocent to achieve their objectives. Religious people do not murder the innocent. (Applause.)

And so we're facing this ideological struggle of people who use asymmetrical warfare. What distinguishes this ideological struggle from previous ideological struggles -- those with -- against fascism or communism, is that in this war, individuals use weapons to kill innocent people -- car bombs and suicide vests. And they do so to frighten the West. They do so to create chaos and confusion. They do so with the aim of creating vacuums into which their hateful ideology can flow. And that's why you see the September 11th attacks, in London, in Madrid, in Jordan -- attacks around the world. Some will say these are just isolated moments of -- where all we need is a good, strong law enforcement response. I think they're all part of an ideological struggle.

And the interesting development that is taking place in the beginnings here of the 21st century is, the freedom movement is on the march. I'm not surprised, and you shouldn't be either. I believe there is an Almighty. I believe the gift of that Almighty to every man, woman and child is freedom. I believe that people, if given a chance, will always go to freedom -- and that's what you're beginning to see. (Applause.)

And yet every time freedom tries to advance, these ideologues murder innocent people -- in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Israel, in Palestine. People who can't stand the thought of free societies unleash their hatred by killing innocent people. And the great challenge facing America and the world is, one, will we recognize the challenge? Do we understand the consequences of success and failure? And will the United States be bold and stay in the lead? And my answer is, we have been, we will continue to be, and we must be engaged in making sure we lay the foundation of peace for the sake of our children and grandchildren. (Applause.)

We will prevail. We will prevail in this ideological struggle because liberty is powerful. Liberty is hopeful. The enemy we face can only convince people to join their cause is when they find hopelessness. And so our strategy is threefold: one, protect the homeland; two, stay on the offense against these folks; and three, provide an alternative -- a hopeful alternative to despair and doubt and hopelessness.

So today I want to spend some time on the strategy. The first -- our most important job in government -- whether it be the federal government, state government, or local government -- is to protect you. And remember the lessons of September the 11th: that oceans cannot protect us, that we face cold-blooded killers who, in our case, resorted to mass murder to send a message. We've got -- you know, thankfully there hasn't been an attack on our homeland since then. That's not for the lack of effort by these evil people.

I hope you take heart in knowing there are a lot of really fine people working long, long hours to get the best information possible to protect the homeland. There's a -- unbelievably dedicated folks. And as I said in the State of the Union the other night, we owe these folks a debt of gratitude. And we owe them more -- we owe them the tools necessary to protect the American people.

And one such tool in this different kind of war is to fully understand the intentions, the motives, the plans of people who use suicide and bombs to kill the innocent. If these terrorists and extremists are making phone calls into our country, we need to know why they're calling, what they're thinking, and what they're planning. In order to protect the American people, our professionals need to have the tools necessary to do their job you expect them to do. And one such tool is a surveillance program that guarantees the rights of our citizens, but doesn't extend those same guarantees to those who would do us harm. (Applause.)

Congress passed such a bill last year. They recognized that this tool was important to protect America. And yet, unfortunately, the bill they passed is set to expire tomorrow -- or was set to expire tomorrow. Now, it's an interesting train of logic, isn't it? The tool was necessary six months ago, and yet it was set to expire as if the threat to our country was set to expire. But it's not. There's still ongoing threats.

I will sign today, here in Las Vegas, an extension, 15-day extension to the Protect America Act. This will give people and Congress time to pass a good piece of legislation that makes sure that our professionals have the tools necessary to do their job, and provides liability protection to carriers who it is assumed helped us in protecting the American people. This Protect America Act and its strengthening is essential to the security of the United States of America. I will sign the extension, but I expect members from both political parties to get this work done so our professionals can protect the American people. (Applause.)

The second part of our strategy is to stay on the offense against these folks -- I mean every day stay on the offense; an unrelenting effort to find them and bring them to justice. It's hard to plot, plan and attack America if you're running and hiding. It's hard to recruit if you're cutting off money. It is hard to spread your poison if other reasonable people join the cause. And so we spend a lot of time doing everything we can to keep the pressure on these folks. And we got some good people working it.

I repeat to you, I know there's some good folks who think this is just simply a law enforcement matter. It is not. This is an effort that requires all assets of the United States, and requires coalitions working together. I mean, we need to be sharing intelligence. We need our military on the hunt. We need to be working with allies to keep the pressure on them, and that's exactly what we're doing. America must not relent. If our most important job is to protect the American people, we have got to stay on the offense, and defeat the enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. (Applause.)

The third part of our strategy is to spread liberty. I love to tell folks that one of the most unique relationships I had as your President was with the Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi. He's no longer the Prime Minister, but for a good period of time during my presidency, he was. You might remember, he's the fellow that Laura and I took to Elvis' place in Memphis. (Laughter.) He loved Elvis, and he wanted to go to Elvis' place. (Laughter.) And it was a -- we had a -- it was a remarkable experience. (Laughter.)

Even more remarkable was the fact that the United States had no stronger ally in defeating terror, no stronger ally than understanding the power of freedom to be transformative. I say "no stronger ally" -- Tony Blair was strong; there was a lot. But so was Prime Minister Koizumi. What's ironic about that is that my dad fought the Japanese. Many of your relatives fought the Japanese. They were the sworn

enemy of the United States of America. There was unbelievable hatred in our culture toward the Japanese. After all, they attacked us -- the second largest attack on American soil; the first being that on September the 11th, 2001.

And yet 60 years later, the son of a Navy fighter pilot was sitting at the table with the Prime Minister of the former enemy, strategizing on how to win this ideological war. I find it ironic. The summary I've come away with is that liberty is transformative. People want to be free and, if given the chance, will be free, do the hard work necessary to be free. And liberty has got the capacity to transform an enemy to an ally.

And therefore we ought to have confidence in liberty's power to bring the peace we want, and not shy away from helping people realize the great blessings of freedom. We've got to be confident in the transformative powers of liberty, recognizing that deep in everybody's soul is the desire to be free. I recognize that is a -- there are some in the world who dismiss the capacity of liberty to take hold in parts of the world. There used to be a foreign policy that advocated stability as the cornerstone of our policy. But stability just masks the hopelessness that seethed beneath the surface. If you believe this is an ideological struggle like I do, then it's paramount to help people realize a different ideology than that of the enemy. And that's what you're seeing unfold.

And the two most evident places that that's happening right now is in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both those countries are part of the war on terror. These aren't separate, you know, wars; they're part of the same war; different theaters, certainly different circumstances, but the outcome is essential for our security. So I want to spend a little time on Afghanistan and a little time on Iraq.

In Afghanistan -- the interesting lesson on Afghanistan for the world to see is that how the vision of the enemy would be implemented -- in other words, these poor folks had the Taliban as their oppressors. The Taliban also, as you might remember, provided safe haven to those who came and attacked us. But if you lived in Afghanistan in those days and were a mom of a child -- particularly a female child -- you had no hope. These thugs didn't believe in freedoms, they didn't believe in women having equal status, they didn't believe young girls should be educated. And if you dared express your opinion that didn't mesh with theirs, you'd be whipped in the public square or killed. These are brutal people. That's the vision that these folks have for the world. That's what they want. Some Americans probably just missed that and say, oh, that's just a pipe dream, pie in the sky on their part.

I think the United States needs to take that vision seriously. I think it's in our interest to liberate people. I think it's in our interest that when we find human suffering we help deal with it. (Applause.) In Afghanistan I am proud to report that the United States of America, thanks to a brave military, liberated 25 million people and gave them a chance to realize the blessings of liberty. Since liberation from the Taliban and since al Qaeda was routed out of that country, where they no longer had safe havens to plot and plan an attack, the people of Afghanistan voted for a President; they voted for a parliament; girls now go to school; highways are being built; health clinics are being constructed around the country.

Is it a perfect government? No, but neither were we. I would remind our fellow citizens that we believed all men were created equal and for a hundred years had slaves. Afghanistan is working on their -- on

democracy. And it's hard work. It's not easy. It doesn't happen overnight. But it's in our interest to help them. It's in our interest to help them because we believe that liberty is transformative. And a part of the world that was once a safe haven for an enemy that attacked us will be a more hopeful place when freedom takes hold.

The other night to the nation I said, we're sending 3,200 Marines in to supplement our troops there. And the reason why is because this enemy is relentless in trying to overthrow this democracy, and it's in our interest to stop them. See, we've got to do the hard work now to make sure that a future generation of Americans can grow up in peace.

Iraq. The decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision. The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. (Applause.) And so are the Iraqi people. There has been some interesting progress in Iraq. They wrote a constitution. They voted. Imagine a society going from a brutal tyrant to being able to vote in a short period of time.

And yet the enemy -- in this case, al Qaeda, as well as militia, militia fighters, some sponsored by Iran, some of them just pure criminals -- resented the fact that freedom was moving, and in early 2006 began a campaign, and they were looking like they were successful. There was unspeakable violence, and I was concerned about it. I was concerned about it because I understand the consequences of failure for our peace, for the future peace for our children.

I had to make a tough decision. And the decision I made was based on the considered judgment of military people, considered judgment of a lot of folks who were following Iraq. It was not based upon any Gallup poll or focus group. It was based upon what was right for the future of the United States, and that is, as opposed to pulling troops out, send more in. (Applause.) And we went in with a counterinsurgency strategy, all aimed at, of course, helping the Iraqis stand up and do the hard work necessary, but in the meantime making sure that when the enemy was cleaned out of neighborhoods, there was somebody there to provide security for the folks.

Our surge, by the way, was more than just military. We surged diplomats and public service officials, provincial reconstruction teams to make sure that in neighborhoods where an enemy had been routed -- and we have folks there, along with the Iraqis, to provide security -- that there was also a opportunity to improve life for the average citizen. The Iraqis surged. They created 100,000 new soldiers and police. But curiously enough, and I don't know whether a lot of our citizens understand this, 80,000 local citizens stepped up and said, we want to help patrol our own neighborhoods; we're sick and tired of violence and extremists.

I'm not surprised that that happens. I believe Iraqi moms want the same thing that American moms want, and that is for their children to grow up in peace. That's what I believe. (Applause.) I don't believe that people welcome violence. They got sick of it. People want to be free. People want to live in peace, whether you're Methodist or Muslim, whether you're American or Iraqi. And what you're watching play out now is that -- folks are becoming more confident in their capacity to self-govern. They're becoming confident that if they step up and expose these extremists or push these extremists out of their neighborhood, there will be enough muscle to help them.

The surge is working. I know some don't want to admit that, and I understand. But the terrorists understand the surge is working. Al Qaeda knows the surge is working. They thought they could live safely in Anbar province. This was the place from which they were going to launch attacks throughout Iraq and throughout the Middle East. This is a place where they proudly proclaimed, this is our safe haven. They no longer have a safe haven in Anbar province; they're on the run. We're going to keep them on the run, and it's in our interests for our own security to keep them on the run. (Applause.)

As a result of our successes, some of our troops are coming home. A Marine expeditionary unit and one Army brigade came home in December. It's not going back. I don't know whether my fellow citizens understand that or not. We surged, we accomplished missions, the Iraqis are more capable. The commanders on the ground say that now we can do the same job with less troops. So folks came home for Christmas. It is anticipated that five more Army brigades and two Marine battalions will be coming home by July.\* That's over 20,000 troops will be coming home -- (applause) -- because we've been successful, that's why.

You know, a lot of folks say, well, what's next, Mr. President? And my answer is, we have come too far in this important theater in this war on terror not to make sure that we succeed. And therefore any further troop reductions will be based upon commanders and conditions. Iraq is important for our security. I will be making decisions based upon success in Iraq. The temptation, of course, is for people to say, well, make sure you do the politically right thing. That's not my nature. That's not exactly what we're going to do. (Applause.)

The fundamental question is whether or not democracy can take hold. In other words, the security situation is improving, and therefore will there be efforts by the Iraqi people to seize the moment? Reconciliation is taking place at the local level. People -- as I told you, the basic instinct of people is to want to live in peace, and one way you do that is you put this horrible past as best you can behind you, and look forward.

So the two things I look for are: one, economic development -- you know, a good economy will lead to a more hopeful future, therefore causing people to be more likely to reconcile; and politics. On the economic front, the interesting thing about Iraq, as opposed to Afghanistan, is that they've got assets and a lot of money. And we, of course, want to help them build the ministries and the bureaucracies necessary to make sure that money gets spent on people. I know that may sound counterintuitive to you, but governments do need the capacity to take a budget and distribute monies throughout the country in an equitable basis in order for people to say, well, this experience in democracy is worthwhile. I just want to make sure the bureaucracy doesn't get too big when you do it. (Applause.)

And so we -- you know, we chart business startups and markets. And all I can tell you is I talk to our ambassador and General Petraeus on a weekly basis, and they report that markets that were once shut down in dismal places as a result of attacks are beginning to come back and flourish, and life is improving dramatically. Baghdad -- the capital of Baghdad is -- which was once subject to unbelievable sectarian violence, is improving, and life is returning -- and that's positive.

So we watched a lot about the inflation rates and unemployment rates -- and they're doing pretty well, they really are, given the fact that they've come from a tyrannical regime that let the infrastructure of

the country fall apart.

The other question is politics. One of the lessons of democracy is, a lot of times what happens at the local level informs people at the central government level. And competition is pretty healthy in a democracy. As I told you, the local folks are reconciling; they're getting along better, they understand they have a common future. And the people in Baghdad are beginning to respond. They pass budgets. They're now arguing about their 2008 budget. I'm not sure which government does their budget work better -- ours or theirs. (Laughter.) I can tell you this: We definitely have an issue with earmarks. (Laughter.) I don't know if they do yet or not. (Laughter.)

And by the way, I'm going to do something about earmarks. I signed an executive order the other day, basically saying if you slip these -- slip this spending into bills that don't get debated or voted on, we're not going to spend your money. And this executive order will -- (applause.) Let me rephrase that: The money will be spent, but just not on those projects necessarily. (Laughter.) Not on those projects necessarily. And this executive order goes beyond my presidency.

But they passed budgets. They're sharing oil revenues. They need to pass a law codifying the oil issue there, but they are sharing oil revenues. They've got revenues, namely from oil, and they're distributing those revenues to the provinces. They passed a pension law and a de-Baathification law, which basically is a part of reconciling with the past. They're now in the process of debating a provincial powers law.

And what's important about that is the -- there's a constant debate in free societies -- at least in our free society -- about the relationship between the federal government and state governments. The Governor is most interested in that debate. (Laughter.) We believe to the best extent possible that we ought to devolve power. Of course, we even take it -- this group here, including me -- takes it a step further. We devolve power not only in local government, but more importantly to the individuals, which help define the political landscape of those state and locals. (Applause.)

But this debate is now ongoing in Iraq. Isn't it interesting? I know four years seems like an eternity, particularly in this world of instant news and 24-hour whatever on TV. But it's -- but Saddam is removed -- and now a government elected by the people, debating the proper role between central government and provincial government. And that's an important debate. And it's ongoing in the council of representatives now, and we anticipate them passing that bill.

What I'm telling you is you're watching a democracy evolve. You're watching people become more confident in their ability to self-govern. And it's important that we help them. It's important we help them for our own security, and it's important that we help them as a part of this freedom movement. People have said, freedom can't take hold in the Middle East. I strongly disagree. I believe freedom will take hold in the Middle East, and Iraq is an essential part of this strategy. We will succeed in Iraq. (Applause.) We will succeed because the Iraqi people want to succeed. And it's in our interest to help them. Success in Iraq will show the world that freedom can take root in the Middle East and inspire others. Success in Iraq will mean that we'll have an ally in this struggle against extremists in the heart of the Middle East.

Success in Iraq will send an interesting message to its neighbor, Iran. Failure in Iraq would cause people to doubt the sincerity of the United States when it comes to keeping commitments. Failure in Iraq would embolden the extremists. Failure in Iraq would say to thugs and killers, the United States is a paper tiger. Failure in Iraq would embolden other extremists in the Middle East. Failure in Iraq would embolden Iran. It's in our strategic interests that we succeed. And we will succeed. We have done this kind of work together.

I said in my speech the other day that it is vital for this generation to do the hard work. It is vital for this generation to assume the responsibilities of peace and take the lead, so that when we look back 30 to 40 years from now people will say, thank goodness America didn't lose faith with liberty. Thank goodness they didn't abandon a value system that they believe is universal. And I believe an American President will be sitting down with elected from the Middle East saying the same thing to audiences in Nevada that I said about Prime Minister Koizumi. (Applause.)

I hope that you are inspired by the fact that people are willing to take risks for freedom. I hope these examples of Iraqi citizens who step forward to protect their neighborhoods and their families and children inspire you. They certainly inspire me. I hope you're inspired by political figures who defy killers. They inspire me. And I hope you're inspired by our military.

I want to tell you an interesting story. When I was in Reno, I met a guy -- a family named the Krissoff family. They had lost a son in Iraq. He was a Marine. And one of my duties is to meet with the families of the fallen. I did so last night in Northern California. It's an inspiring experience, by the way. It is a -- you know, in many ways the comforter becomes comforted by the spirit of these -- and pride of these families.

And so I met the Krissoffs. Mr. Krissoff is a 60-year-old guy -- I shouldn't be calling him "mister" because I'm a little older than he is -- (laughter) -- but he's a baby-boomer just like me, and a successful doctor. He said something very interesting to me. He said that he wanted to honor his country and honor his son by joining the military. I looked at the guy and said, yes, okay. (Laughter.) I said, why don't you? He said, well, some of the folks think I'm a little old. (Laughter.) I said, I don't -- with him being a younger fella. (Laughter.) So I helped him.

And in Laura's box at the State of the Union sat Lieutenant Commander Bill Krissoff, serving the United States of America.

Ours is a fabulous country. We are a dedicated, compassionate people, aiming to lay the foundation of peace for generations to come. I told you early, some see the world and tremble. I see the world and see opportunities. And the great opportunity before us is to lay the foundation of peace, and that is exactly what we're doing. God bless. (Applause.)

Thank you all. Okay, I got a little bit of business to do. If you don't mind sitting down for just a second, I am now going to sign this 15-day extension to give members of the House and the Senate time to get this bill to my desk for the sake of our security, and thank you for witnessing this. (Applause.)

(The bill was signed.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much. God bless. (Applause.)

END 10:03 A.M. PST

\*It is anticipated that four more Army brigades will be coming home by July. One Army brigade and two Marine battalions have already returned home and will not be replaced.

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