

Remarks Announcing Bipartisan Agreement on a Joint Resolution To Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq
October 2, 2002

The President. Thank you all for coming. Today I'm joined by leaders of the House and the Senate from both political parties to show our unity of purpose in confronting a gathering threat to the security of America and to the future of peace.

I want to thank in particular Speaker Hastert and Leader Gephardt, Leader Lott, for the tremendous work in building bipartisan support on this vital issue. I also want to thank Senators Warner, Lieberman, McCain, and Bayh for introducing this resolution, which we've agreed to on the floor of the Senate this morning.

The text of our bipartisan resolution is clear, and it is strong. The statement of support from the Congress will show to friend and enemy alike the resolve of the United States. In Baghdad, the regime will know that full compliance with all U.N. security demands is the only choice and that time remaining for that choice is limited.

On its present course, the Iraqi regime is a threat of unique urgency. We know the treacherous history of the regime. It has waged a war against its neighbors. It has sponsored and sheltered terrorists. It has developed weapons of mass death. It has used them against innocent men, women, and children. We know the designs of the Iraqi regime. In defiance of pledges to the U.N., it has stockpiled biological and chemical weapons. It is rebuilding the facilities used to make those weapons.

U.N. inspectors believe that Iraq could have produced enough biological and chemical agent to kill millions of people. The regime has the scientists and facilities to build nuclear weapons and is seeking the materials needed to do so.

We know the methods of this regime. They buy time with hollow promises. They move incriminating evidence to stay ahead

of inspectors. They concede just enough to escape—to escape punishment and then violate every pledge when the attention of the world is turned away.

We also know the nature of Iraq's dictator. On his orders, opponents have been decapitated and their heads displayed outside their homes. Women have been systematically raped as a method of intimidation. Political prisoners are made to watch their own children being tortured. The dictator is a student of Stalin, using murder as a tool of terror and control within his own cabinet, within his own army, even within his own family. We will not leave the future of peace and the security of America in the hands of this cruel and dangerous man.

None of us here today desire to see military conflict, because we know the awful nature of war. Our country values life and never seeks war unless it is essential to security and to justice. America's leadership and willingness to use force, confirmed by the Congress, is the best way to ensure compliance and avoid conflict. Saddam must disarm—period. If, however, he chooses to do otherwise, if he persists in his defiance, the use of force may become unavoidable.

The course of action may bring many sacrifices. Yet delay, indecision, and inaction could lead to a massive and sudden horror. By timely and resolute action, we can defend ourselves and shape a peaceful future. Together with the Congress, I will do everything necessary to protect and defend our country.

In accepting this responsibility, we also serve the interests and the hopes of the Iraqi people. They are a great and gifted people, with an ancient and admirable culture, and they would not choose to be ruled by violence and terror. The people

of Iraq are the daily victims of Saddam Hussein's oppression. They will be the first to benefit when the world's demands are met. Americans believe all men and women deserve to be free. And as we saw in the fall of the Taliban, men and women celebrate freedom's arrival.

The United States will work with other nations. We'll work with other nations to bring Saddam to account. We'll work with other nations to help the Iraqi people form a just government and a unified country. And should force be required, the United States will help rebuild a liberated Iraq.

Countering Iraq's threat is also a central commitment on the war on terror. We know Saddam Hussein has longstanding and ongoing ties to international terrorists. With the support and shelter of a regime, terror groups become far more lethal. Aided by a terrorist network, an outlaw regime can launch attacks while concealing its involvement. Even a dictator is not suicidal, but he can make use of men who are. We must confront both terror cells and terror states, because they are different faces of the same evil.

I brought this issue to the attention of the world, and many, many countries share our determination to confront this threat. We're not alone. The issue is now before the United States Congress. This debate will be closely watched by the American people, and this debate will be remem-

bered in history. We didn't ask for this challenge as a country, but we will face it, and we will face it together.

As the vote nears, I urge all Members of Congress to consider this resolution with the greatest of care. The choice before them could not be more consequential. I'm confident that members of both parties will choose wisely.

I appreciate Members of Congress who are willing to address you all, starting with the Speaker of the House, Denny Hastert.

[At this point, Speaker J. Dennis Hastert, Representative Richard A. Gephardt, Senator John W. Warner, Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, and Senator John McCain made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Speaker Hastert, Representative Gephardt, Senator Warner, Senator Lieberman, and Senator McCain. The Office of the Press Secretary also made available the text of the Joint Resolution To Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception for Gubernatorial Candidate Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., in Baltimore, Maryland October 2, 2002

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks. The reason this is such a successful event is because people know that Bob Ehrlich will make a great Governor for Maryland. I believe it, and that's why I'm here. I believe that's the reason why Democrats and Republicans support this

good man—because he's honest, he's hard-working, and he's got a positive vision for everybody who lives in the State of Maryland.

I'm here because this man is somebody who wants to unite this State, not divide it. And I'm here because he married well.