

All of our actions in Africa—from fighting AIDS to promoting security and prosperity across the continent—represent the ideals that have always guided America in the world. The United States is committed to the success of Africa, because the peoples of Africa deserve to live in freedom and dignity and to share in the progress of our times.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 8:15 a.m., local time, on July 11 at

the Sheraton Pretoria Hotel and Towers in Pretoria, South Africa, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m., e.d.t., on July 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 11 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. Due to the 6-hour time difference, the radio address was broadcast after completion of all other Presidential activities for July 12. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement Welcoming the New Leadership of the African Union *July 12, 2003*

I congratulate President Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique on his appointment as the new President of the African Union. I also extend congratulations to President Konare of Mali on his appointment as the new Chair of the Commission of the African Union. I am confident that the African Union—and the people of Africa—will be well-served by the experience and vision these two leaders bring to these important posts.

Africa is a place of both great potential and daunting challenges. The United States shares the hopes of peoples across the Afri-

can Continent for a future of greater peace, greater freedom, and greater development. And America will work in partnership with all African nations committed to these great goals.

The African Union has the mandate and the responsibility to respond effectively to Africa's challenges, including instability, terrorist threats, challenges to the effective rule of law, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and humanitarian emergencies. I look forward to the African Union continuing to play a vital role in shaping Africa's future under its dynamic new leadership.

Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations and an Exchange With Reporters *July 14, 2003*

President Bush. I'm so honored that Kofi Annan has come back to the Oval Office. We've had a great discussion. I briefed him on my trip to Africa, his native continent, and I told him that I was most impressed with the possibilities of the continent. I saw the potential, and I also saw many of the

problems. And I want to thank the Secretary-General for his work on hunger and HIV/AIDS. We're going to work closely with him to help defeat the pandemic.

And the other thing we talked about was Liberia. I assured him that our Government's position is a strong position. We

want to enable ECOWAS to get in and help create the conditions necessary for the cease-fire to hold, that Mr. Taylor must leave, that we'll participate with the troops. We're in the process, still, of determining what is necessary, what ECOWAS can bring to the table, when they can bring it to the table, what is the timetable, and be able to match the necessary U.S. help to expediting the ECOWAS' participation.

I told the Secretary-General that we want to help, that there must be a U.N. presence, quickly, into Liberia. He and I discussed how fast it would take to blue-helmet whatever forces arrived, other than our own, of course. We would not be blue-helmeted. We would be there to facilitate and then to leave. And we had a good discussion. And I think we had a meeting of minds on that subject.

We talked about Iraq. And I told him and assured him that the United States would stay the course because we believe freedom is on its way to the Iraqi people. And by that I mean that the Iraqi people are beginning to assume more and more responsibility in their society. Free society requires a certain kind of responsible behavior. And we're seeing more and more of that amongst the Iraqi citizens. Our deep desire is to make sure that the infrastructure is repaired, that people are educated, and health care delivery systems are good.

I was honest in my appraisal when I told him that I recognize certain elements of the former regime are interested in keeping the infrastructure blown up because of—for pure power reasons, and that—I told him, and I will continue to speak as clearly as I can that an attack on the Iraqi infrastructure by the Ba'athists are—is an attack on the Iraqi people. And it's those Iraqis who are causing the continued suffering, where there's suffering in Iraq.

But we're making good progress. I'm proud of Jerry Bremer's work. And then the—we also talked about other issues that are on his mind and my mind. The long and short of it is we had a great discussion.

Mr. Secretary-General, I'm honored you're here.

Secretary-General Annan. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I think it is fair to say that it's wonderful that I should be meeting the President soon after the return—his return from Africa, my own continent. We weren't too far away. I was in Mozambique when he was in South Africa and Botswana.

But I would want to thank the President for the interest in the continent and his determination to help defeat the AIDS pandemic. I think it is a tragedy that is not only taking away the future of Africa; it is really destroying the present.

And it's a disease that takes parents away from children, teachers away from students, doctors away from hospitals. So the effort that is going in is absolutely worthwhile. And at the African Union Summit, this topic was very much on everyone's mind.

We also discussed, as the President has indicated, the situation in Liberia. And I'm satisfied with the discussions we've had and the approach the U.S. Government is taking. And of course, there is an assessment team in west Africa, but we have more or less agreed to a general approach on the Liberian issue, and I'm very pleased with that.

We talked about at least where the President's leadership has made a difference. Over the past couple of weeks, things are going in the right direction. We have bumps in the road, but I think, with the determination of the leaders and the support of the international community, we will make progress on this very difficult issue.

In Iraq, we were encouraged to see the formation of the Governing Council yesterday. And I must say that my special representative, Sergio de Mello, and Mr. Bremer are working very well together.

And on the Hill, I indicated that regardless of the differences that existed between nations before the war, now we have a challenge. The challenge is to stabilize Iraq,

to help Iraq to become a peaceful, stable, and prosperous state. And I think everyone needs to help. An Iraq that is at peace with itself and its neighbors is in the interest of the neighbors and the entire international community.

So I would want to see the entire community, international community, come together to assist the Iraqi people and to help us stabilize a region.

President Bush. Thank you, Kofi.

Quality of Intelligence/Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Mr. President, thank you. On Iraq, what steps are being taken to ensure that questionable information like the Africa uranium material doesn't come to your desk and wind up in your speeches?

President Bush. Well, let me first say that, you know, I think the intelligence I get is darn good intelligence. And the speeches I have given were backed by good intelligence. And I am absolutely convinced today, like I was convinced when I gave the speeches, that Saddam Hussein developed a program of weapons of mass destruction and that our country made the right decision.

We worked with the United Nations—as Kofi mentioned, not all nations agreed with the decision, but we worked with the United Nations. And Saddam Hussein did not comply. And it's the same intelligence, by the way, that my predecessor used to make the decision he made in 1998.

We are in the process now of interrogating people inside of Iraq to—and looking at documents, exploring documents to determine the extent that—what we can find as quickly as possible. And I believe, firmly believe, that when it's all said and done, the people of the United States and the world will realize that Saddam Hussein had a weapons program.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Liberia

Q. On Liberia, are you now telling us that you will send U.S. troops to Liberia, and how many, and when will this happen?

President Bush. Yes, see, that's—what I'm telling you is that we want to help ECOWAS. It may require troops, but we don't know how many yet. And therefore, it's hard for me to make a determination until I've seen all the facts. And as Kofi mentioned, there's still—or the Secretary-General mentioned, excuse me—[laughter]—there's still—a little informal here. They are still—our teams, our military is assessing ECOWAS' strength, how soon, how quick, what kind of troops, who they are, to determine what is necessary from our side to fulfill the commitment I have made that we will help maintain the cease-fire.

By the way, this is conditional upon Mr. Taylor leaving. He's got to leave. I think everybody understands that. We discussed that, by the way, in Nigeria, with President Obasanjo, who clearly understands that as well. But we're still, Steve, determining the facts. It is very difficult for me to make a decision until I see the facts.

Q. Well, when do you think—

President Bush. Well, I don't know. That's an interesting question. We asked that question today at a national security briefing. And as soon as we can get it, there is—the Secretary-General has been very helpful in urging nations to move forward with those plans. We hear numbers all the time as to—you know, Nigeria may be able to contribute this, or so and so may be able to contribute that. Maybe you'd like to answer the question—I mean, as soon as possible is the answer. We'd like to get the assessment teams. There has been two such teams out and about, and we'd like to get the information as soon as possible.

Secretary-General Annan. And Jacques Klein is going to be the special representative—the gentleman with the red tie—in

Liberia. So you'll be seeing a lot of him, and you can talk to him.

Q. No long-term commitments—

President Bush. Correct. I think everybody understands any commitment we had would be limited in size and limited in tenure. Our job would be to help facilitate an ECOWAS presence which would then be converted into a U.N. peacekeeping mission.

Secretary-General Annan. Maybe I should add something here. The understanding which is emerging now is for the ECOWAS forces to send in a vanguard of about 1,000 to 1,500 troops. And I think this is something that they have worked out amongst themselves and now discussing in Accra with the—also with the U.S. team. After that, from what I gather, Taylor—President Taylor will leave Liberia, and then the force will be strengthened, hopefully with U.S. participation and additional troops from the west African region. And eventually, the U.N. blue helmets will be set up to stabilize the situation, along the lines that we've done in Sierra Leone, and once the situation is calmer and stabilized, the U.S. would leave and the U.N. peacekeepers would carry on the operation.

President Bush. Yes, Dana [Dana Bash, CNN], one last question.

State of the Union Address

Q. Mr. President, back on the question of Iraq and that specific line that has been in question—

President Bush. Can you cite the line? [Laughter]

Q. Really? I could, if you gave me time.

President Bush. When I gave the speech, the line was relevant.

Q. So even though there has been some question about the intelligence—the intel-

ligence community knowing beforehand that perhaps it wasn't, you still believe that when you gave it—

President Bush. Well, the speech that I gave was cleared by the CIA. And look, I mean, the thing that's important to realize is that we're constantly gathering data. Subsequent to the speech, the CIA had some doubts. But when I gave the—when they talked about the speech and when they looked at the speech, it was cleared. Otherwise, I wouldn't have put it in the speech. I'm not interested in talking about intelligence unless it's cleared by the CIA. And as Director Tenet said, it was cleared by the CIA.

The larger point is, and the fundamental question is, did Saddam Hussein have a weapons program? And the answer is: Absolutely. And we gave him a chance to allow the inspectors in, and he wouldn't let them in. And therefore, after a reasonable request, we decided to remove him from power, along with other nations, so as to make sure he was not a threat to the United States and our friends and allies in the region. I firmly believe the decisions we made will make America more secure and the world more peaceful.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Charles Taylor of Liberia; L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. Secretary-General Annan referred to Sergio Vieira de Mello, U.N. Special Representative for Iraq; and Ambassador Jacques Klein, U.N. Special Representative for Liberia.