

commitment to representing the people of Iraq. I'm impressed by the strength of your character and your desire to succeed. And I'm impressed by your strategy. We've discussed—I discussed earlier with the Prime Minister and here with his Cabinet and with members of my Cabinet the strategy necessary to have a country that is capable of answering to the needs of the people.

We discussed the security strategy. We discussed an economic strategy, a reconstruction strategy. And all of it makes sense to me. And so I've come to not only look you in the eye, I've also come to tell you that when America gives its word, it will keep its word; that it's in our interests that Iraq succeed. It's not only in the interests of the Iraqi people, it's in the interests of the American people and for people who love freedom.

Iraq is a part of the war on terror. Iraq is a central front on that war, and when Iraq succeeds in having a government of and by and for the people of Iraq, you will have dealt a serious blow to those who have a vision of darkness, who don't believe in liberty, who are willing to kill the innocent in order to achieve a political objective.

And so, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you for giving me and my Cabinet a chance to hear from you personally and a chance to meet the members of this team you've assembled. It's an impressive group of men and women, and if given the right help, I'm convinced you will succeed, and so will the world.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 6:36 p.m. at the U.S. Embassy.

Remarks to United States Military Personnel in Baghdad June 13, 2006

Thank you all. Thank you for the warm welcome. Thought I'd stop in to say hello. [*Laughter*] I bring greetings from a grateful nation. I thank you for your sacrifice; I thank you for your service; I thank you for making history.

You know, one of the things I try to do is put good people in place who accomplish hard jobs. And I can't think of two better leaders than Zal Khalilzad and General Casey to lead this important effort. I thank you all very much for your service to our country. Your sacrifice is noble, and your sacrifice is important.

I understand long deployments are tough; they're tough on you, and they're tough on your families. And so the first thing I want to tell you is the American people are incredibly grateful for what you do, and I bring their greetings and their thanks for the sacrifices you and your family make.

These are historic times. The mission that you're accomplishing here in Iraq will go down in the history books as an incredibly important moment in the history of freedom and peace, an incredibly important moment of doing our duty to secure our homeland.

You know, right after September the 11th, I knew that some would forget the dangers we face. Some would hope that the world would be what it's not—a peaceful place in which people wouldn't want to do harm to those of us who love freedom. I vowed that day, after September the 11th, to do everything I could to protect the American people. And I was able to make that claim because I knew there were people such as yourself who were willing to be on the frontline in the war on terror.

Baghdad and Iraq is a front in the war on terror. It is a part of our mission to

help make sure that the world is a better place. I truly believe the work that you're doing here is laying the foundation of peace for generations to come, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

The progress here in Iraq has been remarkable when you really think about it. The people of this country suffered under the hands of a brutal tyrant. And thanks to the United States forces and coalition forces, the people are liberated from the clutches of Saddam Hussein. America is safer, the world is better off, and the Iraqi people have a chance to realize the great blessings of liberty because Saddam Hussein is no longer in power.

Thanks to your hard work, the Iraqi people have been given a chance to go to the polls—not once but three different times—to elect a government that is dedicated to the will of the people. Today I have come to not only thank you but to look Prime Minister Maliki in the eyes, to determine whether or not he is as dedicated to a free Iraq as you are, and I believe he is.

I met with the Cabinet officials from all walks of life here in Iraq and came away with the distinct impression that they are unified in serving the people of Iraq. They want to succeed. The faith and future of Iraq is in their hands, and our job is to help them succeed—and we will.

I have come today to personally show our Nation's commitment to a free Iraq. My message to the Iraqi people is this: Seize the moment; seize this opportunity to develop a government of and by and for the people. And I also have a message to the Iraqi people, that when America gives a commitment, America will keep its commitment.

Our work is not done with the formation of a unity government. This Government is just getting started. And the enemies of a free Iraq will do everything they can to stop the progress. That should tell us something about the enemies of a free Iraq. Who wouldn't want the people's will to be

expressed? Who wouldn't want a government to be able to meet the needs of the people? Those who kill the innocent lives or those who have no concept of liberty have no sense of justice, have no respect for human rights and human dignity.

But I believe the Iraqi Government that's formed does respect human rights and human dignity. It will respond to the will of the people. There are going to be tough days ahead and more sacrifice for Americans as well as Iraqis. But I come here—come away from here believing that the will is strong and the desire to meet the needs of the people is real and tangible.

You know, one of the things that we've got to realize—"we," the world, have got to realize, is that Iraqi women want their children to grow up in a peaceful world. They want their sons and daughters to be well educated. They want to live in peace and harmony. They want to be able to realize their hopes and aspirations. It's a common desire, and is one that you all are helping the Iraqis realize. It's important work; it's vital work; and it's historic work.

Our military will stay on the offense. We will continue to hunt down people like Mr. Zarqawi and bring them to justice. We will continue to train the Iraqis so they can help the unity Government secure the peace. I've told the American people that as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down, and I appreciate all the military folks here who are working hard to help the Iraqi forces become capable and able to do the job the Iraqi people expect them to do. Those of you who are not in the military, the civilians, have got a really important job to do as well, and I want to thank you for the job you're doing.

It is clear that Saddam Hussein destroyed many of the institutions necessary for this society to succeed. It is clear that he was a selfish, brutal leader who was willing to sacrifice infrastructure and civil society in order to meet his narrow objectives. And it is clear to me that our job

is to help the Prime Minister and his Government implement his strategy and his plan to restore infrastructure and education and health and agricultural society so that people have the confidence in their new Government. Yours is hard work, but it's necessary work, and the Government of the United States stands strongly beside you.

The stakes are high, and what happens here in Iraq reaches far beyond the borders of Iraq. The war on terror really will be addressed by strong actions by our intelligence and military services to bring to justice those who would do us harm. I've told the American people we will defeat the enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home.

Ultimately, the victory in the war on terror, the victory in a struggle against those who have no ideology—well, they've got an ideology, but it's an ideology that is dark and dismal. It's one that doesn't respect human dignity. It's an ideology that doesn't believe in the freedom to worship. It's an ideology that doesn't respect the role and rights of women in society. It's an ideology that has no hope. The way to defeat that ideology is with an ideology of light. I believe in the universality of freedom. I believe deep in everybody's soul is the desire to be free.

We don't expect the Iraqi Government to look like the American Government. We expect an Iraqi government to honor its traditions and its histories and its religious faiths. But we do expect the Iraqi Government to honor the right of every man, woman, and child to live in a free society. And when Iraq succeeds—and it will—the rest of the world, particularly in the Middle East, will see such a hopeful example of what's possible.

I told you earlier, we were laying the foundation of peace for generations to come, and we are, because we go with confidence, knowing that liberty is the desire

of every soul. When Iraq succeeds, reformers and people who desire to live in a free society will see such a hopeful example, and they'll begin to demand the same rights and the same conditions and the same hopeful society.

And that's why I tell you, what you're doing is historic in nature. People will look back at this period and wonder whether or not America was true to its beginnings; whether we strongly believed in the universality of freedom and whether we were willing to act on it. Certainly we acted in our own self-interest right after September the 11th, and now we act not only in our own self-interests but in the interests of men, women, and children in the broader Middle East, no matter what their religion, no matter where they were born, no matter how they speak.

This is a moment—this is a time where the world can turn one way or the other, where the world can be a better place or a more dangerous place. And the United States of America and citizens such as yourself are dedicated to making sure that the world we leave behind is a better place for all.

It is such an honor to be here. It is such an honor to be with you. May God bless you all; may God bless your work; may God bless your families; and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:32 p.m. at the U.S. Embassy. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; former President Saddam Hussein, and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, who was killed in Baquba, Iraq, on June 7. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference *June 14, 2006*

The President. Good morning. Thank you. I've just returned from Baghdad, and I was inspired to be able to visit the capital of a free and democratic Iraq.

It was a pleasure to meet face to face with the Prime Minister. I talked to him on the phone a couple of times, but I thought it was important to sit down with him and talk to him in person. I saw firsthand the strength of his character and his deep determination to succeed, to build a country that can sustain itself, govern itself, and defend itself.

I also had the pleasure of meeting with people who work for the U.S. Government, our Embassy staff, the intelligence community, and I had a chance to thank them. Theirs is a tough job, and they're far away from home, and obviously, they miss their families. And it was an honor to say to them, I appreciate their hard work, and so do the American people.

And I met with our troops. I had a chance to congratulate those that were responsible for bringing Zarqawi to justice. You know, when you're in a theater like that, it's important to hear words of congratulations sometimes, to hear that their efforts are appreciated—and doing hard work. And I got to do that.

General Casey briefed me on the operations that followed the death of Zarqawi. He told me that Iraqi and coalition forces are still on the offense, that they launched a series of raids on terrorist targets across Iraq. We've got new intelligence from those raids which will enable us to continue to keep the pressure on the foreigners and local Iraqis that are killing innocent lives to stop the advance of a country that can sustain itself and govern itself and defend itself.

Obviously, the raids aren't going to end terrorism. I understand that, and the American people understand that, and the Iraqi

people understand that. But the terrorists are vulnerable, and we will strike their network and disrupt their operations and continue to bring their leaders to justice.

Prime Minister Maliki and I held a joint meeting of our two Cabinets—members of my Cabinet participating by video, some of whom were slightly surprised to see me from afar. I told the Prime Minister how impressed I was to meet the team he assembled. These are good people from different walks of life. I appreciated very much the agenda he's laid out. In other words, he's got a plan to succeed. And I appreciated their determination—it's not just his determination but their Cabinet's determination to succeed. In other words, part of the success in Iraq depends upon the Iraqis and their will and their desire. The Iraqi people have expressed their desires, and now it's up to the Government to follow through.

The Prime Minister briefed us on immediate steps he's taken in three key areas: to improve security; to build up the Iraqi economy so they can see—the Iraqi people can see real progress, real economic progress; and he's reaching out to the international community to help secure support for this new Government. We discussed ways that my administration can help the Prime Minister accomplish these objectives. The policy of the United States Government is to stand with this new Government and help them succeed, and we will do what it takes to help them succeed.

The Prime Minister is taking immediate action to implement a plan to improve security, and his top priority is around Baghdad. Operation Together Forward started this morning. This operation is a joint effort to restore security and rule of law to high-risk areas in the capital city. It will be carried out by some 26,000 Iraqi soldiers, some 23,000 Iraqi police, backed up by