AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:47 a.m., March 28, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 31.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom at Camp David, Maryland

March 27, 2003

President Bush. Thank you all. It's my honor to welcome my friend and Prime Minister of Great Britain Tony Blair back to Camp David. America has learned a lot about Tony Blair over the last weeks. We've learned that he's a man of his word. We've learned that he's a man of courage, that he's a man of vision. And we're proud to have him as a friend.

The United States and United Kingdom are acting together in a noble purpose. We're working together to make the world more peaceful. We're working together to make our respective nations and all the free nations of the world more secure, and we're working to free the Iraqi people.

British, American, Australian, Polish, and other coalition troops are sharing the duties of this war, and we're sharing the sacrifices of this war. Together, coalition forces are advancing day by day, in steady progress, against the enemy. Slowly but surely, the grip of terror around the throats of the Iraqi people is being loosened.

We appreciate the bravery, the professionalism of the British troops and all coalition troops. Together we have lost people, and the American people offer their prayers to the loved ones of the British fallen, just as we offer our prayers to the loved ones of our own troops who have fallen.

We're now engaging the dictator's most hardened and most desperate units. The campaign ahead will demand further courage and require further sacrifice. Yet we know the outcome: Iraq will be disarmed; the Iraqi regime will be ended; and the long-suffering Iraqi people will be free.

In decades of oppression, the Iraqi regime has sought to instill the habits of fear in the daily lives of millions. Yet, soon, the Iraqis will have the confidence of a free people. Our coalition will stand with the citizens of Iraq in the challenges ahead. We are prepared to deliver humanitarian aid on a large scale and, as a matter of fact, are beginning to do so as we speak.

Today the Prime Minister and I also urge the United Nations to immediately resume the oil-for-food program. More than half the Iraqi people depend on this program as their sole source of food. This urgent humanitarian issue must not be politicized, and the Security Council should give Secretary-General Annan the authority to start getting food supplies to those most in need of assistance.

As we address the immediate suffering of the Iraqi people, we're also committed to helping them over the long term. Iraq's greatest long-term need is a representative government that protects the rights of all Iraqis. The form of this government will be chosen by the Iraqi people, not imposed by outsiders. And the Prime Minister and I are confident that a free Iraq will be a successful nation.

History requires more of our coalition than the defeat of a terrible danger. I see an opportunity, as does Prime Minister Blair, to bring renewed hope and progress to the entire Middle East. Last June 24th, I outlined a vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Soon, we'll release the roadmap that is designed to help turn that vision into reality, and both America and Great Britain are strongly committed to implementing that roadmap.

For nearly a century, the United States and Great Britain have been allies in the defense of liberty. We've opposed all the great threats to peace and security in the world. We shared in the costly and heroic struggle against Nazism. We shared the resolve and moral purpose of the cold war. In every challenge, we've applied the combined power of our nations to the cause of justice, and we're doing the same today. Our alliance is strong;

our resolve is firm; and our mission will be achieved.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Blair. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for your welcome. Thank you for your strength and for your leadership at this time. And I believe the alliance between the United States and Great Britain has never been in better or stronger shape.

Can I also offer the American people, on behalf of the British people, our condolences, our sympathy, our prayers for the lives of those who have fallen in this conflict, just as we have offered the condolence, the sympathy, and the prayers to the families of our own British servicemen.

Just under a week into this conflict, let me restate our complete and total resolve. Saddam Hussein and his hateful regime will be removed from power. Iraq will be disarmed of weapons of mass destruction, and the Iraqi people will be free. That is our commitment; that is our determination; and we will see it done.

We had this morning a presentation of the latest military situation, which shows already the progress that has been made. It's worth just recapping it, I think, for a moment. In less than a week, we have secured the southern oilfields and facilities and so protected that resource and wealth for the Iraqi people and avoided ecological disaster. We've disabled Iraq's ability to launch external aggression from the west. Our forces are now within 50 miles of Baghdad. They've surrounded Basra. They've secured the key port of Umm Qasr. They've paved the way for humanitarian aid to flow into the country. And they brought real damage on Iraq's command and control. So we can be confident that the goals that we have set ourselves will be met.

I would like to pay tribute to the professionalism and integrity of our forces and those of the United States of America, our other coalition allies, and to say how their professionalism, as well as their skill and their bravery, stands in sharp contrast to the brutality of Saddam's regime.

Day by day, we have seen the reality of Saddam's regime: His thugs prepared to kill their own people; the parading of prisoners of war; and now, the release of those pictures of executed British soldiers. If anyone needed any further evidence of the depravity of Saddam's regime, this atrocity provides it. It is yet one more flagrant breach of all the proper conventions of war. More than that, to the families of the soldiers involved, it is an act of cruelty beyond comprehension. Indeed, it is beyond the comprehension of anyone with an ounce of humanity in their souls.

On behalf of the British Government, I would like to offer my condolences particularly to the family and the friends of those two brave young men who died in the service of their country and to the ordinary Iraqi people, to whom we are determined to bring a better future.

The future of the Iraqi people is one reason why much of our discussion has focused on humanitarian issues. Again, here we have the ship, the *Sir Galahad*, loaded with tons of supplies destined for the people of Iraq. The other immediate humanitarian priority is to restart the U.N. oil-for-food program, which the President and I discussed and which I will be discussing with Kofi Annan later this evening, and this is urgent.

We also discussed the postconflict issues. Contrary to a lot of the comment on this, the position is exactly as the President and I set out in the Azores, namely, that we will work with the U.N., our allies and partners and bilateral donors. We will seek new U.N. Security Council resolutions to affirm Iraq's territorial integrity, to ensure rapid delivery of humanitarian relief, and endorse an appropriate postconflict administration for Iraq.

But let me emphasize once again that our primary focus now is and must be the military victory, which we will prosecute with the utmost vigor. And the immediate priority for the United Nations is, as the President was indicating a moment or two ago, the oil-for-food program.

In addition, as has just been said to you, we had an excellent discussion of the Middle East, and we both share a complete determination to move this forward. It is, indeed, often overlooked that President Bush is the first U.S. President publicly to commit himself to a two-state solution, an Israel confident of its security and a viable Palestinian state. And I welcome the decision announced recently to publish the roadmap as soon as

the confirmation of the new Palestinian Prime Minister is properly administered.

Finally, I would just like to say this: I think it is important that we recognize at this time that the goals that we are fighting for are just goals. Whatever the difficulty of war, let us just remember this is a regime that has brutalized its people for well over two decades. Of course, there will be people fiercely loyal to that regime who will fight all the way; they have no option. But I have no doubt at all that the vast majority of ordinary Iraqi people are desperate for a better and different future, for Iraq to be free, for its government to be representative of its people, for the human rights of the people to be cared for.

And that is why, though of course our aim is to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and make our world more secure, the justice of our cause lies in the liberation of the Iraqi people. And to them we say, we will liberate you. The day of your freedom draws near.

President Bush. We'll take two questions a side. We would hope that you would respect asking one question per question.

Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press].

Resolution of Operation Iraqi Freedom/ U.N. Role in Postwar Iraq

Q. That, of course, means I can ask each leader one question.

President Bush. No, it does not mean that. Of course, you will anyway, but——

Q. Yes, sir.

First you, Mr. Prime Minister. Briefly, Secretary Powell said yesterday that the U.N. should have a role in postwar Iraq but that the United States should have a significant, dominating control of post-Saddam Iraq. How will that kind of talk play in Europe?

And Mr. President, can you help me understand the timing of this war? You talked yesterday that it will be—we're far from over. Today you said it's going slowly but surely; we're working our way to our end goal. Given that the resistance is as strong as it's been in the south and that we have what you call the most hardened, most desperate forces still around Baghdad, are we to assume that this is going to last—could last months and not weeks—and not days?

President Bush. I'll answer that question very quickly and then get to his. However long it takes to win. That's——

Q. ——take months?

President Bush. However long it takes to achieve our objective. And that's important for you to know, the American people to know, our allies to know, and the Iraqi people to know.

Q. It could be months?

President Bush. However long it takes. That's the answer to your question, and that's what you've got to know. It isn't a matter of timetable; it's a matter of victory. And the Iraqi people have got to know that, see. They've got to know that they will be liberated and Saddam Hussein will be removed, no matter how long it takes.

Go ahead.

Prime Minister Blair. In relation to the United Nations, there's no doubt at all that the United Nations has got to be closely involved in this process. That's not just right; it's in everyone's interest that it happens. All I'm saying to people is, the focus—the immediate focus has got to be on the oil-for-food program, because that is the thing we need to get sorted out with the United Nations literally in the next few days.

Now, after that is the issue of the postconflict administration, where, as we said in our Azores statement, it's important there, again, that the U.N. is involved and that any postconflict administration in Iraq is endorsed by it.

But there are huge numbers of details to be discussed with our allies as to exactly how that is going to work. And also, the conflict is not yet over; we are still in the conflict. So we will carry on discussing that with the U.N., with other allies. But I think that is best done in those discussions without trying to do it by discussion through the press conference or through megaphone diplomacy.

But about the role of the U.N. and the basis of the principles we set out in the Azores Summit, there is simply no difference at all there. But there are a huge amount of details as to exactly how that is to be implemented that have to be a matter of discussion, and also, a matter of a reflection of the reality that we will face when we get to the point of postconflict.

Andy.

Speculation on Duration of the War

Q. Andrew Marr from the BBC. For both leaders, if I may. We've, all of us, noted quite a shift in emphasis over the last few days from a hope that this could be over very, very quickly, to the military in both countries briefing about months. My question is really, why do you think that shift has taken place? Did we underestimate the scale of Iraqi resistance? Has it been the weather? Has it been poor advice at the beginning of the campaign, or is it a military question?

Prime Minister Blair. Well, you know, in the previous two campaigns in which I've been involved, Kosovo and Afghanistan, you reach this particular point where people start asking—ask us to speculate on exactly how much time it takes to get the job done. The important thing is the job will be done. There is no point in entering into a speculation of how long it takes except to say we have been, I think, just under a week into this conflict. Now, because of the way it's reported—you've got this constant 24-hours-a-day media—it may seem to people that it's a lot longer than just under a week. But actually, it's just under a week. And in just under a week, there is a massive amount that has already been achieved. I mean, after all, coalition forces are within 50 miles of Baghdad; the southern oilfields are secured; the west is protected from external aggression; we've got forces going into the north.

Now, we will carry on until the job is done. But there is absolutely no point, in my view, of trying to set a time limit or speculate on it, because it's not set by time; it's set by the nature of the job. All I would do, though, is point out to you that within those 6 or 7 days, actually an enormous amount has already been achieved.

I think it's also important just to make one other point, which is we have very deliberately wanted to do this in a way that protects the future of the Iraqi people too. And that's one reason why we went immediately in to secure the oil installations in the south. If we weren't able to do that, then the prospects of the Iraqi people for the future would be blighted. That's why the air campaign has targeted very, very specifically, as specifically as we possibly can, military command and control, the aspects of Saddam's regime, not the civilian population.

So we're doing this in the way that we set it out to achieve our objectives. We will achieve our objectives.

President Bush. I have nothing more to add to that.

Randy [Randall Mikkelsen, Reuters].

War Crimes/Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Mr. President, you've raised the possibility of holding Iraqis accountable for war crimes. I'm wondering if now if you could describe what war crimes you think they've committed to date. And secondly, sir, should the Iraqis be prepared for U.S. retaliation with nuclear weapons if they were to attack coalition forces with weapons of mass destruction?

President Bush. You heard the Prime Minister eloquently talk about the loss of British life. They were murdered, unarmed soldiers executed. I mean, that's a war crime. But you know, I'm not surprised. This man Saddam Hussein has tortured and brutalized his people for a long, long time.

We had reports the other day of a dissident who had his tongue cut out and was tied to the stake in the town square, and he bled to death. That's how Saddam Hussein retains power.

His sons are brutal, brutal people. They're barbaric in nature. So I'm not surprised he's committing crimes against our soldiers. I'm not surprised to hear stories about his thugs killing their own citizens and trying to blame it on coalition forces. I'm not surprised to know that regular army forces are trying to desert but get blown away by fellow Iraqi citizens. I'm not surprised, because the nature of the man who has run the country for a long period of time.

If he uses weapons of mass destruction, that will just prove our case. And we will deal with it. We've got one objective in mind. That's victory, and we'll achieve victory.

Q. [*Inaudible*].

President Bush. Well, they've been sent a message in this war, too, in that if you launch a weapon of mass destruction, you'll be tried as a war criminal. And I urge those

Iraqi generals who have any doubt of our word to be careful, because we'll keep our word. We're going to keep our word to the Iraqi people, and we'll keep our word to those war criminals in Iraq.

Prime Minister Blair. Adam [Adam Boulton, Sky News].

Nature of the Coalition/Execution of British Soldiers

Q. I'd like to break the rule, because I don't think we know the details of why you're using this word "executed" about the British servicemen. I would like if you could explain that.

But could I ask you both—you both went into the history, the justness of the cause that you believe that this war is. Why is it then, that if you go back to that history, if you go back over the last century or, indeed, recent conflicts in your political careers, you have not got the support of people who have been firm allies, like the French, like the Germans, like the Turkish? Why haven't you got their support?

President Bush. We've got a huge coalition. As a matter of fact, the coalition that we've assembled today is larger than one assembled in 1991 in terms of the number of nations participating. I'm very pleased with the size of our coalition.

I was down yesterday at CENTCOM and met with many of the generals from the countries represented in our coalition, and they're proud to be side by side with our allies. This is a vast coalition that believes in our cause, and I'm proud of their participation.

Q. They're not Western allies. Why not?

President Bush. We have plenty of Western allies. We've got—I mean, we can give you the list. Ally after ally after ally has stood with us and continues to stand with us, and we are extremely proud of their participation.

Prime Minister Blair. Can I—in relation to our soldiers, the reason I used the language I did was because of the circumstances that we know.

And the reason why I think it is important to recognize the strength of our alliance—yes, there are countries that disagree with what we are doing. I mean, there's no point in hiding it. There's been a division. And you obviously have to take and go and ask those other countries why they're not with us, and they will give you the reasons why they disagree. But I think what is important is to bear in mind two things. First of all, there are an immense number of countries that do agree with us. I mean, I hear people constantly say to me, "Europe is against what you're doing." That is not true. There is a part of Europe that is against what we are doing. There are many existing members of the European Union and virtually all the new members of the European Union that strongly support what we are doing. So there is a division, but we have many allies.

And the second point I'd make is this, that I understand why people hesitate before committing to conflict and to war. War is a brutal and a bloody business. But we are faced with the situation where Saddam Hussein has been given 12 years to disarm voluntarily of weapons of mass destruction that the whole of the international community accepts is a threat, and he has not done so. Instead, what we have had is 12 years in which he has remained in power with these weapons intact and brutalized his own people.

Now, we felt we had come to the point where if we wanted to take a stand against what I believe to be the dominant security threat of our time, which is the combination of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of unstable, repressive states and terrorist groups, if we wanted to take a stand, then we had to act. And we went through the diplomatic process. We tried to make the diplomatic process work, but we weren't able to do so.

And the other reason why I think it is important that we act and why, indeed, we have many, many allies, is because people do know that this is a brutal regime. That is not the reason for us initiating this action—that is in relation to weapons of mass destruction. But it is a reason why, if we do so, as we are doing, we do so in the full knowledge that we are, indeed, going to bring a better future for the Iraqi people.

And if you just want one statistic—although statistics, I'm afraid, never have the same emotional appeal as pictures, but we

don't see these pictures of what has happened in Iraq in the past—but just one statistic: Over the past 5 years, 400,000 Iraqi children under the age of 5 died of malnutrition and disease, preventively, but died because of the nature of the regime under which they are living. Now, that is why we're acting.

And yes, there are divisions in the international community. There are many people on our side; there are those that oppose us. But that is for us, I'm afraid——

Q. ——why do they——

Prime Minister Blair. Well, I'm afraid, Adam, that is a question to ask to other people as well as to us. All I can tell you is why we are acting and why we believe our cause to be just. And yes, at the end of this whole process, we need to go back over it and ask why this has happened. But I simply say to you that if the world walks away from the security threat facing us and if we back down and take no action against Saddam, think of the signal that would have sent right across the world to every brutal dictator, to every terrorist group.

Now, we believe that we had to act. Others have disagreed. As I say, at some point, we will have to come back, and we'll have to discuss how the disagreement arose. But I have no doubt that we're doing the right thing. I have no doubt that our cause is just, and I have no doubt that were we to walk away from this conflict at this time, we would be doing a huge disservice to future generations.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11 a.m. in the hangar. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Legislation on the Amber Alert System

March 27, 2003

As we take steps abroad to make the world a safer place for all, there are important steps we can take at home to make America a safer place for children.

I commend the House for acting today on legislation that will help expand, enhance, and coordinate the successful Amber Alert system across our Nation. I look forward to legislation reaching my desk as quickly as possible so that I may sign it into law.

The prevention and investigation of child abductions will always be a top priority in my administration. That is why my administration began taking steps last year to expand and improve the Amber Alert system, including allocating existing Federal resources to this effort and appointing a Federal coordinator within the Department of Justice.

Protecting our children is a shared priority for the American people and Federal, State, and local authorities. We must use every resource possible to find and safely return missing children to their families and their homes, just as we will continue to use every tool within the law to vigorously prosecute and severely punish those who would do our children harm.

Remarks to National Veterans' Organizations

March 28, 2003

Good afternoon. Thanks for coming, and welcome to the people's house. It is my honor to welcome distinguished veterans to the White House. I'm especially pleased to have met with leaders from the veterans' organizations at this crucial time for our country.

The men and women who have worn the Nation's uniform set an example of service