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and 2 months since our country was attacked, the men and women of our Armed Forces have engaged the terrorist enemy on many fronts. They've confronted grave dangers to defend the safety of the American people. They have liberated two nations, Afghanistan and Iraq, delivering more than 50 million people from the hands of dictators. Those who serve and fight today are adding great achievements of their own to America's history. America is grateful for their daring, grateful for their honor, and grateful for their sacrifice.

On this Veterans Day, with our Nation at war, Americans are deeply aware of the current military struggle and of recent sacrifice. Young Americans have died in liberating Iraq and Afghanistan. They've died in securing freedom in those countries. The loss is terrible. It is borne especially by the families left behind. But in their hurt and in their loneliness, I want these families to know your loved ones served in a good and just cause. They died in distant lands to fight terror, to advance freedom, and to protect America. They did not live to be called veterans, but this Nation will never forget their lives of service and all they did for us.

At this hour, many thousands are following their duty at great risk. One young man serving in Iraq recently said this: ''We in the military signed up and pledged to protect this great country of ours from enemies foreign and domestic.'' ''We're fighting,'' he said, ''so that the next generation might never have to experience anything like September the 11th, 2001.''

Today and every day, the prayers of the American people are with those who wear our country's uniform. They serve a great cause and they follow a great tradition, handed down to them by America's veterans. Our veterans from every era are the finest of citizens. We owe them the life we know today. They command the respect of the American people, and they have our lasting gratitude.

Thank you for coming today. May God bless America, and may God bless all who defend it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:38 a.m. at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to David Berger, national commander, Army and Navy Union of the United States of America.

Remarks at the Heritage Foundation President's Club Luncheon

November 11, 2003

Ed, thank you very much. It's an honor to be here. I appreciate your invitation. I want to thank you for your decades of leadership in the conservative movement. Presidents come and go, except here at the Heritage Foundation. [*Laughter*] I appreciate being with your good bride, Linda, the trustees of the Heritage, the longtime Heritage supporters, and the Ronald Reagan Fellow at Heritage, a man who is a fine leader, a fine Attorney General, Ed Meese.

It's appropriate that we gather in the building named for Ronald Reagan. The Heritage Foundation emerged as an important voice in Washington during the Reagan years. The American people gave Ronald Reagan his mandate for leadership. Yet it was the Heritage Foundation, with a book by that title, from which he drew ideas and inspiration. Ever since, in the councils of Washington, Heritage has been an advocate for free enterprise, traditional values, and the advance of liberty around the world. My administration has benefited from your good work, and so has our country. Thank you for what you do.

We meet on Veterans Day, and I know there are many veterans in this room. On behalf of the Nation, I thank you for your service to our country. The title of ''veteran'' is a term of great respect in America. All who served, whether for a few years or for many, have put the Nation's needs above their own. All stood ready if the order came to risk everything for their country's cause. Our wars have taken from us some of our finest citizens and every hour of the lifetimes they had hoped to live. And the courage of our military has given us every hour we live in freedom.

In every generation, members of the Armed Forces have been loyal to one another and faithful to the ideals of America. After the Second World War, returning veterans often said they had just been doing their jobs,

or didn't talk about their service at all. Yet they knew the stakes of the fight they had been in and the magnitude of what they had achieved. Long after putting away his uniform, one American expressed his pride in having served in World War II. He said, "I feel like I played my part in turning this from a century of darkness into a century of light." This is true of all who have served and sacrificed in the struggles of the 20th century. They maintained the greatest fighting force in the world. They kept our country free, and we're grateful to them all.

We come to this Veterans Day in a time of war. And today's military is acting in the finest traditions of the veterans who came before them. They've given all that we've asked of them. They are showing bravery in the face of ruthless enemies and compassion to people in great need. Our men and women in uniform are warriors, and they are liberators, strong and kind and decent. By their courage, they keep us safe; by their honor, they make us proud.

When we lose such Americans in battle, we lose our best. And the time—this time of brave achievement is also a time of sacrifice. Not far from this place, at Army and Navy medical centers, young servicemembers are recovering from injuries of war. Not far from here, at Arlington National Cemetery, as in hometowns across America, we have laid to rest young men and women who died in distant lands. For their families, this is a terrible sorrow, and we pray for their comfort. For the Nation, there is a feeling of loss, and we remember and we honor every name.

Our people in uniform know the cost and risk of war. They also know what is at stake in this war. Army Command Sergeant Major Ioakimo Falaniko recently lost his son, Private Jonathan Falaniko, in an attack near Baghdad. Father and son both served in Iraq in the same unit, the 1st Armored Division's Engineer Brigade. At his son's memorial service, Command Sergeant Major Falaniko said this: "What our country brings to Iraq is a chance for freedom and democracy. We're making a difference every day. My son died for a good cause. He answered the Nation's call."

Our mission in Iraq and Afghanistan is clear to our servicemembers and clear to our enemies. Our men and women are fighting to secure the freedom of more than 50 million people who recently lived under two of the cruelest dictatorships on Earth. Our men and women are fighting to help democracy and peace and justice rise in a troubled and violent region. Our men and women are fighting terrorist enemies thousands of miles away in the heart and center of their power so that we do not face those enemies in the heart of America. Our men and women are fighting for the security of America and for the advance of freedom, and that is a cause worth fighting for.

The work we are in is not easy, yet it is essential. The failure of democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq would condemn every advocate of freedom in those two countries to prison or death and would extinguish the democratic hopes of millions in the Middle East. The failure of democracies in those two countries would provide new bases for the terrorist network and embolden terrorists and their allies around the world. The failure of democracy in those two countries would convince terrorists that America backs down under attack, and more attacks on America would surely follow.

The terrorists cite the examples of Beirut and Somalia as evidence that America can be made to run. Five years ago, one of the terrorists said that an attack could make America retreat in less than 24 hours. The terrorists are mistaken.

The United States will complete our work in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Democracy in those two countries will succeed, and that success will be a great milestone in the history of liberty. A democratic revolution that has reached across the globe will finally take root in the Middle East. The stagnation and isolation and anger of that region will give way to progress and opportunity. America and the world will be safer from catastrophic violence because terror is not the tool of the free.

The United States has made an unbreakable commitment to the success of freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. We have a strategy to see that commitment through. In Afghanistan, we're helping to build a free and stable

democracy as we continue to track down and destroy Taliban and Al Qaida forces. Following years of cruel oppression, the Afghan people are living with hope, and they're making steady progress.

In Iraq, the terrorists have chosen to make a stand and to test our resolve. Their violence is concentrated in a relatively small area of that country. Yet the terrorists are dangerous. For the sake of Iraq's future, for the sake of America's security, these killers must be defeated.

After the swift advance of our coalition to Baghdad and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, some remnants of the regime fled from the battlefield. Over time, Ba'ath Party and Fedayeen fighters and other Saddam loyalists have organized to attack our forces, to terrorize international aid workers, and to murder innocent Iraqis. These bitter holdouts would rather see Iraqis dead than see them free.

Foreign jihadists have arrived across Iraq's borders in small groups with the goal of installing a Taliban-like regime. Also present in the country are some terrorists from Ansar Islam and from Al Qaida, who are always eager to join in the killing and who seek revenge after their defeat in Afghanistan. Saddam loyalists and foreign terrorists may have different long-term goals, but they share a near-term strategy: to terrorize Iraqis and to intimidate America and our allies.

Recent reporting suggests that despite their differences, these killers are working together to spread chaos and terror and fear. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, 93 percent of terror attacks have occurred in Baghdad and five of Iraq's 18 provinces. The violence is focused in 200 square miles known as the Ba'athist Triangle, the home area of Saddam Hussein and most of his associates. Here, the enemy is waging the battle, and it is here that the enemy will be defeated.

In the last few months, the adversary has changed its composition and method, and our coalition is adapting accordingly. We're employing the latest battlefield technology to locate mortar positions and roadside bombs. Our forces are moving against specific targets based on intelligence gathered from Iraqis. We're conducting hundreds of daily patrols. Last month alone, we made 1,500 raids against terrorists. The recent operations have resulted in the capture or death of more than 1,000 killers, the seizure of 4,500 mortar rounds; 1,600 rocket-propelled grenades have been seized, thousands of other weapons and military equipment. Our coalition is on the offensive in Iraq, and we will stay on the offensive.

The long-term security of Iraq will be assured by the Iraqis themselves. One hundred and eighteen thousand Iraqis are now serving as police officers and border guards, civil defense personnel, and in the facilities protection service. Iraq's security forces join in operations with our troops, and they patrol towns and cities independently. Some 700 troops are now serving in the new Iraqi army. Thousands more are being trained, and we expect to see 35,000 Iraqi troops in the field by the end of next year. Increasingly, the Iraqi people are assuming the responsibilities and the risks of protecting their own country. And their willingness to accept these duties is one of the surest signs that the Iraqis want freedom and that the Iraqis are headed toward self-government.

Under our strategy, increasing authority is being transferred to the Iraqi people. The Iraqi Governing Council has appointed ministers who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Iraqi government. The Council has also begun the process that will lead to a new constitution. No friend or enemy should doubt Iraq liberty will find a lasting home.

Iraqis are a proud people, and they want their national independence. And they can see the difference between those who are attacking their country and those who are helping to build it. Our coalition is training new police; the terrorists are trying to kill them. We're protecting pipelines and powerplants for the good of the Iraqi people; the terrorists are trying to blow them up. We're turning authority over to Iraqi leaders; the terrorists are trying to assassinate them. We're offering aid and self-rule and hope for the future; the terrorists offer nothing but oppression and death. The vast majority of Iraqis know exactly what is going on in their country today. Having seen the worst of tyranny, the Iraqi people will reject the return of tyranny.

After decades of a dictator's sustained assault on Iraq's society and dignity and spirit, a Jeffersonian democracy will not spring up in a matter of months. We know that our Ba'athist and terrorist enemies are ruthless and cunning. We also know that the lives of Iraqis have improved greatly in 7 short months. Yet, we know the remaining tasks are difficult.

We also know a few things about our own country. America gained its own independence and helped free much of the world by taking on difficult tasks. We're a confident people, and we have a reason to be confident. Our Armed Forces are skilled and powerful and humane. They're the best in the world. I will keep them that way.

We've got good friends and allies serving with us in Iraq. There are 32 countries standing beside our troops. Our commanders have the capabilities they have requested, and they're meeting a changing enemy with flexible tactics. The Congress has provided the resources we need to support our military and to improve the daily lives of newly liberated people. Other nations and organizations have stepped up to provide more than $18 billion to the emerging democracies of Afghanistan and Iraq. The peoples of those two countries are sacrificing for their own liberty. And the United States once again is fighting in the cause of our Nation, the great cause of liberty. And we know that the cause of liberty will prevail.

Much is asked of us, and we have answered this kind of challenge before. In the summer of 1948, the Soviet Union imposed a sudden and total blockade on the city of Berlin in order to force the allies out. More than 2 million people would soon be without food or fuel or medicine. The entire world watched and wondered if free peoples would back down, wondered whether free people would abandon their commitments. It was at the outset of the cold war, and the will and the resolve of America were being measured.

In an urgent meeting, all the alternatives were discussed, including retreat. When the moment of decision came, President Harry Truman said this: "We stay in Berlin, period. We stay in Berlin, come what may." By the determination of President Truman, America and our allies launched the Berlin airlift and overcame more than 10 months of siege. That resolve and the daring of our military saved a city and held back the Communist threat in Europe.

Nearly four decades later, Ronald Reagan came to West Berlin with the same kind of resolve, and vision beyond the cold war. When he called on the Soviets to tear down that wall, he was asserting a confident new doctrine. He believed that communism can not only be contained but transcended, that no human barrier could hold back the spread of human liberty. The triumph of that vision eventually turned enemies into friends, healed a divided continent, and brought security and peace to Europe and America.

Two years into the war on terror, the will and resolve of America are being tested in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Again the world is watching. Again we will be steadfast. We will finish the mission we have begun, period.

We are not only containing the terrorist threat, we are turning it back. We believe that freedom is the right of every person. We believe that freedom is the hope of every culture. We believe that freedom is the future of every nation in the Middle East. And we know as Americans that the advance of freedom is the surest path to peace.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Edwin J. Feulner, president, The Heritage Foundation, and his wife, Linda Leventhal; former Attorney General Edwin Meese III; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom To Secretary General Lord Robertson of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

November 12, 2003

Good morning. I'm proud to welcome members of the diplomatic corps and my administration, and of course Lord Robertson, the Secretary General of NATO, to the