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were kind of grabbing me as I was walking by and say, "Don't let me down."

As we did that day, and as I'm sure you did, and I know those men and women felt, we were—we took it personally. I took it personally. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

And during these tough times, I have also seen the character of this country. You know, it wasn't so long ago people had doubts about America. They had doubts about our character. They had doubts about our capacity to meet a serious challenge or to serve something greater than self-interest. But Americans gave their answer loud and clear. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. I saw America, just like you did, unite when it mattered most.

We're going to need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. The world is counting on our country to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our great land, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. at the Lawrence C. Phipps Memorial Conference Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bill Owens of Colorado and his wife, Frances; Bruce D. Benson, Victory 2004 Colorado finance chairman, and his wife, Marcy; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Interview With RAI Television

June 1, 2004

Europe-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, it will be in a few days the anniversary of the D-day. Italy and Europe are grateful to the United States for the liberation from fascism and the nazism. But today, Europe and America are still divided about Iraq. When you go in Europe, there will certainly be some demonstration against you. What is the responsibility of this situation?

The President. Yes, look, first of all, we share the same values—we being America and Europe. And one of the values we share is the freedom for people to express themselves. So I have no problem with people saying, "I disagree." Matter of fact, I think it's a healthy sign, and I think it's positive.

Secondly, there are—there is common agreement that Iraq must be free and peaceful. We had disagreements about the decision to enforce the U.N. Security Council resolution, but there's common agreement in Europe with America that it's in the world's interest that Iraq be free and peaceful. Today I just talked to the new Prime Minister and had a very good conversation with him. And he said, "Thank you for giving us a chance, and thank you for standing with us." And when he said thank you, he wasn't talking just to me. He was talking to the Italian people and the American people and the Brits and all the people in our coalition that are now helping in Iraq.

So I'm very upbeat and very—as I head over to honor what happened 60 years ago, I think we're now seeing unity to work toward common good today. And I'm looking forward to it.

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution/Situation in Iraq

Q. Yes, but some Europeans blame you for having kept them out of the decision to go to the war in Iraq.

The President. Yes.

Q. Do you think this is the real reason for present difficulties?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't see many difficulties. You mean in Iraq?

Q. In Iraq.

The President. Oh, in Iraq.

Q. And at the U.N. as well.

The President. Well, I think you'll see——

Q. The ground and the——

The President. Yes. No, I think you'll see in the U.N. there's going to be common agreement. I think we'll get a new Security Council resolution. Remember, 1441—at the Security Council, we voted unanimously to

say to Saddam Hussein, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." Then it became clear he didn't disarm and didn't disclose, and so we had a debate about the definition of serious consequences.

My attitude is, when you say something, you better do it. In other words, the world said, "Serious consequences, Mr. Hussein." And had there not been serious consequences, I think he would have been extremely dangerous, and the United Nations would have been viewed as very weak.

And so, the United States, along with a lot of other nations, agreed that we must enforce serious consequences. But everybody had a chance to participate. Everybody had a chance, particularly on the Security Council, to say yes or no. But that is now behind us, and that's what is important for the people of your great country to understand. There is a better day ahead.

Now, in terms of Iraq, it's tough. And the reason it's tough is because there are killers in that country who want to stop the march to freedom. The worst thing they fear is free elections, but they're not going to stop us. That's what you've got to understand. We are not going to be intimidated by killers in Iraq or anywhere else, for that matter.

Q. Some have said that you never admit to any shortcomings, much less failures. Looking back at the past year, do you have anything to reproach yourself regarding what has gone wrong? Did you make any mistakes?

The President. Listen, any time you go to war, circumstances change. And the fundamental question is, were we flexible enough to change with the circumstances? And we have been. Could we—this is all hypothetical, when you think about it. We are changing a country from tyranny to freedom, a country where people were brutalized, tortured, raped, killed, maimed, to a country which is going to govern itself. And it has been hard work.

A lot of things didn't happen that we thought might happen, the oil production, for example. We thought that would be blown up, and it would cost the Iraqi citizens a lot of money. It wasn't. We thought that people would go hungry or there would be mass refugees, neither of which happened.

What did happen is, is that we moved too quickly. Our troops stormed through to Baghdad, and then it caused—it enabled some of the Saddam loyalists, some of them, to disperse. In other words, they didn't stay and fight. They ran off. They regrouped and came back to fight. And I—and our troops were given the flexibility on the ground to deal with that. Now, I wish the Iraqi people had overwhelmingly said, "Thank you for coming." I think they will. But some didn't. Some said, "Let's fight them."

Iraqi Interim Government

Q. But don't you think that now this new government could been seen as a puppet government because there are a lot of elements close to America—America gives them money?

The President. Well, we—look, you're talking about the current Prime Minister.

Q. Yes.

The President. And you bet we supported a group that he headed. We didn't support him. We supported his group. You know why? Because he wanted to get rid of Saddam Hussein, and the reason why he did is not because of America. He wanted to get rid of Saddam Hussein because Saddam Hussein killed and tortured his fellow citizens. You remember what Saddam Hussein is like. He was a tyrant. He was brutal. He had torture rooms. There was mass graves we discovered. I had the other day in the Oval Office seven men whose hands had been cut off by Saddam Hussein.

Q. We have shown this picture.

The President. Have you? Good.

Q. Yes, we have.

The President. A very touching moment.

Q. Are you happy with this new government in Iraq?

The President. I am happy that Mr. Brahimi did what he said he would do. The government was picked by the United Nations. Mr. Brahimi went under very difficult circumstances and consulted with a lot of people and came up with what appears to be a very diverse government.

Now, I have just spoken to the Prime Minister and the new President. And I told them two things: One, thank you for taking on a

very difficult assignment, thank you for leading; and two, America and our coalition will help you succeed, but it's up to you to succeed. You're in charge, and we will work with you to succeed.

Prisoner Abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison/ U.S. Credibility

Q. How much has the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib damaged the American moral authority and credibility?

The President. Yes. Well, that's a very good question. Obviously, it was a shameful moment when we saw on our TV screens that soldiers took it upon themselves to humiliate Iraqi prisoners, because it doesn't reflect the nature of the American people or the nature of the men and women in our uniform. And what the world will see is that we will handle this matter in a very transparent way, that there will be rule of law, which is an important part of any democracy. And there will be transparency, which is a second important part of a democracy, and people who have done wrong will be held to account for the world to see.

That will stand—this process will stand in stark contrast to what would happen under a tyrant. You would never know about the abuses in the first place. And if you did know about the abuses, you certainly wouldn't see any process to correct them.

President's Upcoming Visit With Pope John Paul II

Q. You will visit the Pope as well on June 4th.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. The Vatican opposed the war and now recommends, look forward and pay more attention to the religious and moral sensitivity of the Iraqi people. What's your opinion about this recommendation?

The President. Well, I can understand. Look, a lot of people didn't like the war. I understand that completely, and I don't like war. But I'm the guy who has to decide, for our case, whether or not a Saddam Hussein would be a threat to peace, and made a very difficult decision. After having tried all diplomacy, war was the last option.

Secondly, I will tell the—His Holy Father I appreciate his positions—he is a great man—and that I look forward to working with the Iraqis to put in place the conditions so that human rights prevail, something that didn't happen under Saddam Hussein, looking forward to the development of a society in which boys and girls can go to schools and not be filled with hateful propaganda but with knowledge. I look forward to working with the health care workers in Iraq so that people can get decent health care. I will assure His Holy Father that we will do everything we can to elevate the human condition so that people can live in peace and freedom and remind him that a free Iraq in the midst of the Middle East will serve as a great moment of change, will serve as an example for others to follow. You see, when the people in the Middle East see that a free society can exist in the Muslim world, they'll demand the same thing. And free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies are hopeful societies. And in the long run, the best way to defeat terror is to promote freedom, and that's what we're going to do.

Q. Last question.

The President. Sure.

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution/Future of Iraq

Q. If you cannot succeed with the United Nations, do you have a plan B as an exit strategy in Iraq?

The President. We will succeed—we will succeed with the United Nations.

Q. It's sure?

The President. I'm confident. I'm an optimist. I've talked to most of the leaders on the Security Council. I've talked to the Russians, the Chinese, the Germans, the French, of course the Brits, and I know there is a consensus that we must work together for the good of the Iraqi people. This isn't about America. This is about Iraq and the citizens of Iraq who suffered under tyranny for so long. And now we have a chance to work together to promote a free society in a part of the world, by the way, that is desperate for free societies. And I know we'll succeed. I've got great faith in the future. And having talked to the new leadership—some of the new leadership in Iraq—I can tell you they share that same sense of destiny, the same great hope for their people.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.
The President. Good to see you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:55 p.m. in the Library at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi and President Ghazi Ujayl al-Yawr of the Iraqi interim government; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Commencement Address at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado

June 2, 2004

Secretary Roche and General Jumper, General Rosa, Attorney General Ashcroft, Congresswoman Heather Wilson, Air Force Academy graduate 1982, Academy staff and faculty, distinguished guests, officers, cadets, members of the graduating class, and your families: Thanks for the warm welcome. And thanks—thank you for the honor to visit the United States Air Force Academy on your 50th anniversary.

You've worked hard to get to this moment. You survived "Beast," spent 7 months eating your meals at attention, carried boulders from Cathedral Rock, and endured countless hours in Jacks Valley. In 4 years, you've been transformed from "basics" and "smacks"—[*laughter*]—to proud officers and airmen, worthy of the degree and the commission you receive. Congratulations on a great achievement.

Your superintendent has made a positive difference in a short time. I thank him for helping to restore the Academy's tradition of honor, which applies to every man and woman without exception. I thank the superb faculty for your high standards and dedication to preparing Air Force officers. And I thank the parents here today for standing behind your sons and daughters as they step forward to serve America.

This is a week of remembrance for our country. On Saturday we dedicated the World War II Memorial in Washington, in the company of veterans who fought and flew at places like Midway and Iwo Jima and Normandy. This weekend I will go to France for the ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of D-day, at a place where the fate of millions turned on the courage of thousands. In these events, we recall a time of peril and national unity and individual courage. We honor a generation of Americans who served this country and saved the liberty of the world.

On this day in 1944, General Eisenhower sat down at his headquarters in the English countryside and wrote out a message to the troops who would soon invade Normandy. "Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force," he wrote, "the eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you."

Each of you receiving a commission today in the United States military will also carry the hopes of free people everywhere. As your generation assumes its own duties during a global conflict that will define your careers, you will be called upon to take brave action and serve with honor. In some ways, this struggle we're in is unique. In other ways, it resembles the great clashes of the last century between those who put their trust in tyrants and those who put their trust in liberty. Our goal, the goal of this generation is the same: We will secure our Nation and defend the peace through the forward march of freedom.

Like the Second World War, our present conflict began with a ruthless surprise attack on the United States. We will not forget that treachery, and we will accept nothing less than victory over the enemy.

Like the murderous ideologies of the 20th century, the ideology of terrorism reaches across borders and seeks recruits in every country. So we're fighting these enemies wherever they hide across the Earth.

Like other totalitarian movements, the terrorists seek to impose a grim vision in which dissent is crushed and every man and woman must think and live in colorless conformity. So to the oppressed peoples everywhere, we are offering the great alternative of human liberty.

Like enemies of the past, the terrorists underestimate the strength of free peoples. The