

A few days after the attacks, I stood with Rudy where the buildings fell. He'll never forget that day, and neither will I. I'll never forget the evil of the enemy and the suffering of our people. I know we're not fighting a metaphor. And I remember the hard—workers in hardhats there yelling at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." A fellow grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." From that day forward, I have gotten up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

In a new term, we will finish the work we have started. We will stand against terror. We will stand for freedom and peace. And on November 2d, my fellow Americans, I ask you stand with me.

God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. at the Island Grove Regional Park Community Events Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City, and his wife, Judith; Gov. Bill Owens and Lt. Gov. Jane Bergman Norton of Colorado; Marilyn Coors, wife of Colorado senatorial candidate Pete Coors; Steven E. Musgrave, husband of Representative Marilyn N. Musgrave; former Representative Bob Schaffer, senatorial candidate in Colorado; professional baseball player Todd Helton and his wife, Christy; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister John Howard of Australia; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; Osama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist network; and Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA, (Ret.), former combatant commander, U.S. Central Command.

Remarks in Council Bluffs, Iowa

October 25, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you being here. Laura and I are so honored so many came out to say hello. You're lifting our spirits.

I want to thank all the Iowans who are here. Thank you for coming. I want to thank those of you from the great State of Nebraska who took the—[*applause*]. We are here to not only ask for the vote in this part of the

world; we're here to ask for your help. We're here to say that we need your help coming down the stretch. We need you to make the phone calls, find your friends and neighbors and encourage them to go to the polls. With your help, we will carry Iowa and win a great victory on November the 2d.

So when I asked Laura to marry me, she was a public school librarian, and she said—and some of you will probably be able to relate to this—she said, "Fine, I will marry you, but make me a promise." I said, "What is it?" She said, "Promise me I'll never have to give a political speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "You've got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. She's giving a lot of speeches, and when she speaks the American people see a warm, strong, great First Lady.

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!
The President. I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. Now, look, I fully admit he does not have the waviest hair in this race. [*Laughter*] But I want to assure you, I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. [*Laughter*] I picked him because of his experience. I picked him because of his judgment.

We had breakfast with Rudy at our ranch in Crawford. We've just come from Greeley, Colorado. We're headed to Davenport, Iowa. I tell you, it's a great joy to travel with Rudy Giuliani. I'm proud to have his support, and I'm honored to call him friend. And by the way, his wife, Judith, is traveling with us too.

So the last time I saw Senator Grassley, I turned to Laura and said, "Laura, you know the South Lawn has got a lot of grass on it, and we're looking for somebody to come and mow it." [*Laughter*] Let me tell you something about your Senator. When it came time to cut the taxes on the working people of this country, Senator Grassley led the charge in the United States Senate. When it came time to strengthen Medicare to make sure our seniors got prescription drug coverage and rural hospitals were treated fairly, Senator Grassley led the United States Senate. I know the people of Iowa are proud to call him Senator. I'm proud to call him Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank Congressman Steve King from Iowa for joining us today. Congressman, you're doing a fine job. I appreciate you being here.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank those of you who are putting up the signs. I want to thank those of you who are making the phone calls. I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is turn out a big vote on November the 2d.

I want to thank my friend Michael W. Smith for singing for you this evening.

I want to thank all of you who are here who wear our Nation's uniform. Thank you for your service. I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a great example for our military. And I want to thank our military families for the sacrifices you have made.

In the last week of this campaign, I will continue to talk about my vision for a more hopeful America. I'm committed to low taxes and spending discipline. We'll talk about how to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America. I'll talk about how to make sure our farm economy remains strong in America.

In the next 4 years, we'll stay on the path of reform and results in our schools, so no child is left behind in America. I'll remind people we have a plan to make sure health care is more affordable and accessible and that in all we do to reform health care, we'll make sure the decisions are made between doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC. I will remind the people that over the next 4 years, we'll keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors, and we'll strengthen the system for our children and our grandchildren.

I will tell the people we'll continue to promote a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. I will remind them that we'll protect family and marriage, which are the foundations of our society. And I will tell the people that I'll name Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

Yet, all progress we hope to make depends on the security of our Nation. We face enemies who hate our country and would do

anything to harm us. We will fight these enemies with every asset of our national power. We will do our duty and protect the American people.

And that's what I want to talk to you and the good people of Iowa and Nebraska about today, our national security. In the last 4 years, we've been through a lot of history. We saw a ruthless sneak attack on the United States. We learned of heroism on doomed airplanes. We saw the bravery of rescuers rushing toward danger. We have seen our military bring freedom to the oppressed and justice to our enemy. Our Nation has shown its character to the world. We are proud to be Americans.

We are now nearing the first Presidential election since September the 11th, 2001. People of the United States will choose the leader of the free world in the middle of a global war. The choice is not only between two candidates; it's between two directions in the conduct of the war on terror. The American voters must answer these questions: Will America return to the defensive, reactive mindset that sought to manage the dangers to our country?

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Or will we fight a real war, with the goal of victory? In every critical aspect, my opponent and I see the war on terror differently, and Americans need to consider those differences as they make a vital choice.

First, I believe that America wins wars by fighting on the offensive. When I saw all those images of fire and death on September the 11th, I made a decision: Our country will not sit back and wait for future attacks; we will prevent those attacks by going after the enemy.

And so since that day, we are waging a global campaign from the mountains of Central Asia to the deserts of the Middle East, from the Horn of Africa to the Philippines. And those efforts are succeeding. Since September the 11th, 2001, more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice, and the rest of them know we're on their trail.

After September the 11th, we set a new direction for American policy and endorsed a doctrine that is clear to all: If you support

or harbor terrorists, you're equally guilty of terrorist murder.

We destroyed the terror camps that trained thousands of killers in Afghanistan. We removed the Taliban from power. We persuaded the Governments in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to recognize the enemy and to join the fight. We ended the regime of Saddam Hussein, which sponsored terror, and we know that America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Audience members. U.S.A! U.S.A! U.S.A.!

The President. We sent a message to Libya—we sent a clear message to Libya, which has now given up its weapons of mass destruction programs. We have acted through diplomacy and force to shrink the area where the terrorists can freely operate. And our strategy has the terrorists on the run.

My opponent has a different point of view.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He says that by fighting terrorists in the Middle East, America has, quote, "created terrorists where they did not exist."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. This is his argument, that terrorists are somehow less dangerous or fewer in number if America avoids provoking them.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. But this represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the enemy. We're dealing with killers who have made the death of Americans the calling of their lives. If America were not fighting these killers west of Baghdad and in the mountains of Afghanistan and elsewhere, what does Senator Kerry think they would do? Would they begin leading productive lives of service and charity?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Would the terrorists who behead innocent people on camera just be quiet and peaceful citizens if we had not liberated Iraq?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. We are fighting the terrorists with our military in Afghanistan and Iraq and beyond so we do not have to face them in the streets of our cities.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. America is not to blame for terrorist hatred, and no retreat by America would appease them. We don't create terrorists by fighting them; we defeat the terrorists by fighting them.

Our second difference concerns Iraq. I believe victory in Iraq is essential to victory in the war on terror. And we have had a strategy to achieve that victory. The stakes in that country are high. If a terror regime were allowed to reemerge in Iraq, terrorists would again find a home, a source of funding, and vital support. They would correctly conclude that free nations do not have the will to defend themselves. As Iraq succeeds as a free society at the heart of the Middle East, an ally in the war on terror, and a model for hopeful reform in a troubled region, the terrorists will suffer a crushing defeat and every free nation will be more secure.

We are still confronting serious violence from determined enemies. Yet, the Iraqi Interim Government, with American and coalition support, is making progress, week by week. Along with Iraqi forces, we're on the offensive in Fallujah and north Babil. We've restored Government control in Samarra and Tall 'Afar and Najaf. More than 100,000 Iraqi soldiers, police, and border guards are already trained and equipped and bravely serving their country. And more than 200,000 will be in place at the end of next year. An Iraqi independent electoral commission is up and running. Political parties are planning campaigns, and free and fair Iraqi elections will be held on schedule this coming January.

The despicable executions of unarmed Iraqi security forces show the evil nature of the terrorists we fight and prove those terrorists are enemies of the Iraqi people and the American people and the civilized world. The terrorists and insurgents hate our progress and fight our progress, but they will not stop our progress.

We will stay on the offense, and we will prevail. We will help Iraqis get on the path to stability and democracy as quickly as possible, and then our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

My opponent has a different view.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The Senator calls America's mission in Iraq a "mistake," a "diversion," a "colossal error."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And then says he's the right man to win the war.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You cannot win a war you do not believe in fighting.

On Iraq, my opponent has a strategy of pessimism and retreat. He has talked about artificial timetables to pull our troops out. He has sent the signal that America's overriding goal in Iraq would be to leave, even if the job is not done.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That sends the wrong message. It sends the wrong message to Iraqis, who need to know that America will never cut and run. That sends the wrong message to our troops and the troops of our coalition, who need to know that we will honor their sacrifice by completing the mission. My opponent has the wrong strategy for the wrong country at the wrong time. On this vital front of the war on terror, protest is not a policy, retreat is not a strategy, and failure is not an option. As long as I am the Commander in Chief, America will never retreat in the face of terrorism.

Third, I believe that American leadership is indispensable to winning the war on terror. Ever since September the 11th, 2001, America has sounded a certain trumpet. We have stated clearly the challenge to civilization, and we have rallied many nations to oppose it. More than 90 nations are actively engaged in the war on terror. All 26 NATO nations have personnel in either Iraq, Afghanistan, or both. NATO has taken leadership of an international force in Afghanistan, the first out-of-area deployment in the history of our Alliance. Japan has deployed forces to Iraq, the first overseas mission in the history of their democracy. Forces from South Korea are in Iraq as well. America has led. Many have joined. And America and the world are safer.

My opponent takes a different approach. He believes that instead of leading with confidence, America must submit to what he calls a "global test."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm not making that up. [Laughter] He was standing right about just there when I heard him say it. As far as I can tell, that means our country must get permission from foreign capitals before we act in our own self-defense.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. As President, I will always work with other countries and seek their advice. But there is a world of difference between working with good allies and giving a few reluctant nations veto power over our role in the world. I will never submit our national security decisions to the veto of a foreign government.

In addition to a "global test," my opponent promises what he calls a "golden age" of diplomacy to charm critical governments all over the world.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I don't see much diplomatic skill in Senator Kerry's habit of insulting America's closest friends. He has called the countries serving alongside us in Iraq, quote, "a trumped-up coalition of the bribed, the coerced, the bought, and the extorted."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Even last week, my opponent said that we have, quote, "hardly anyone with us in Iraq."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That is a deeply offensive way to treat some 30 nations that are in Iraq, especially the 14 nations that have lost forces in our cause. How can Senator Kerry denigrate the contributions of countries led by the likes of Tony Blair of Great Britain, John Howard of Australia, or Silvio Berlusconi of Italy or Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland and then expect other leaders to stand with America in the future? You cannot expand an alliance by showing contempt for those already in it. In this time of challenge to civilization, America has found strong and responsible allies. They deserve the respect of all Americans, not the scorn of a politician.

Fourth, I believe that America will gain long-term security by promoting freedom and hope and democracy in the broader Middle East. The job of a leader is to look ahead, and our country must look ahead. In 20 years from now, if the Middle East is dominated by dictators and mullahs who build weapons

of mass destruction and harbor terrorists, our children and grandchildren will live in a nightmare world of danger. That does not have to happen. By taking the side of reformers and democrats in the Middle East, we will gain allies in the war on terror; we'll isolate the ideology of murder; and we will help defeat the despair and hopelessness that feeds terror. By spreading freedom and liberty, the world will become a much safer place for future generations.

Progress in the broader Middle East toward freedom will not come easily. Yet, that progress is coming faster than many would have said possible. Across a troubled region, we're seeing a movement toward elections and greater rights for women and open discussions for peaceful reform. The election in Afghanistan this month and the election in Iraq next January will be counted as landmark events in the history of liberty.

My opponent looks at things differently. He is not only skeptical of—about democracy in Iraq; he's not made democracy a priority of his foreign policy. But what is his long-term answer to the threat of terror? Is he content to watch and wait as anger and resentment grow for more decades in the Middle East, feeding more terrorism until radicals without conscience gain the weapons to kill without limit? Ignoring the root causes of terror, turning a blind eye to the oppression and despair of millions may be easier in the short run. But we learned on September the 11th that if violence and fanaticism are not opposed at their source, they will find us where we live.

Instead of offering his own agenda for freedom, my opponent complains that we're trying to, quote, "impose democracy on people in the broader Middle East." Is that what he sees in Afghanistan, unwilling people having democracy forced upon them? We did remove the Taliban by force, but democracy is rising in that country because the Afghan people, like people everywhere, want to live in freedom.

No one forced them to register by the millions or to stand in long lines to vote. For many people, that historic election was a day they will never forget. One man in western Kabul arrived to vote at 7 a.m. He said, "I didn't sleep all night. I wanted to be the first

in my polling station." My fellow citizens, freedom is on the march, and it's changing the world.

We are witnessing big and hopeful events. I believe that people across the world, people in the Middle East want to live in freedom. I believe this because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Our fifth great difference concerns the role of the Presidency. A President has to lead with consistency and strength. In a war, sometimes your tactics have to change but not your principles. Americans have seen how I do my job. Even when you might not agree with me, you know what I believe and where I stand and what I intend to do.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. On good days and on bad days, whether the polls are up or the polls are down, I am determined to win the war on terror, and I will always support the men and women who do the fighting.

My opponent has taken a different approach.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. It's fair to say that consistency has not been his strong point.

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. Senator Kerry says that we're better off with Saddam Hussein out of power, except when he declares that removing Saddam made us less safe. He stated in our second debate that he always believed that Saddam was a threat, except, a few questions later, when he said Saddam Hussein was not a threat.

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. He says he was right when he voted to authorize the use of force against Saddam Hussein but that I was wrong to use force against Saddam Hussein. [Laughter] Now my opponent is throwing out the wild claim that he knows where bin Laden was in the fall of 2001 and that our military passed up the chance to get him in Tora Bora. This is an unjustified criticism of our military commanders in the field. This is the

worst kind of Monday morning quarterbacking. And that's what we've come to expect from Senator Kerry.

In fact, our commander in Afghanistan, General Tommy Franks recently wrote this about Tora Bora: "The Senator's understanding of events does not square with reality." The General said that American Special Forces were actively involved in the search for terrorists in Tora Bora and that intelligence reports at the time placed bin Laden in any of several countries.

Before Senator Kerry got into political difficulty and revised his views, he saw our actions in Tora Bora differently. In the fall of 2001, on national TV, Senator Kerry said this, "I think we have been doing this pretty effectively, and we should continue to do it that way." At the time, the Senator said about Tora Bora, "I think we've been smart. I think the administration leadership has done it well, and we are on the right track." Well, all I can tell you is that I am George W. Bush, and I approve of that message.

Yet, Senator Kerry's record on national security has a far deeper problem than election-year flip-flopping. On the largest national security issues of our time, he has been consistently and dangerously wrong. When Ronald Reagan was confronting the Soviet Union at the height of the cold war, Senator Kerry said that President Reagan's policy of peace through strength was making America less safe.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He voted against many of the weapons systems critical to our defense buildup.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and President Reagan was right.

When former President Bush led a coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1991, Senator Kerry voted against the use of force to liberate Kuwait.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. If his view had prevailed, Saddam Hussein today would dominate the Middle East and possess the world's most dangerous weapons. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and former President Bush was right.

In 1994, just one year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, Senator Kerry proposed massive cuts in America's intelligence budget, so massive that even his Massachusetts colleague, Ted Kennedy, opposed them.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and—we've got to be fair—Senator Kennedy was right.

Just last year, American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan needed \$87 billion for body armor and hazard pay, vehicles, weapons, and bullets. First, Senator Kerry said, "It would be irresponsible to vote against the troops." Then he voted against the troops.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember perhaps the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign when he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." History has shown that Senator Kerry was right, then wrong—[laughter]—then briefly right, and wrong again. Since then, on the \$7 billion, my opponent has said, "The whole thing is a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

During the last 20 years, in key moments of challenge and decision for America, Senator Kerry has chosen the position of weakness and inaction. With that record, he stands in opposition not just to me but to the great tradition of the Democratic Party. The party of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman and John Kennedy is rightly remembered for confidence and resolve in times of war and hours of crisis. Senator Kerry has turned his back on "pay any price" and "bear any burden." He's replaced those commitments with "wait and see" and "cut and run."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Many Democrats in this country do not recognize their party anymore. Today I want to speak to every one of them. If you believe that America should lead with strength and purpose and confidence in our ideals, I would be honored to have your support, and I'm asking for your vote.

All the differences I outlined today add up to one big difference, and it's important

for our fellow citizens to understand that difference. Senator Kerry says that September the 11th did not change him much at all.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. His policies make that clear. He says the war on terror is primarily a law enforcement and intelligence gathering operation.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. His top foreign policy adviser says, “The war is just like a metaphor, like the war on poverty.” The Senator’s goal is to go back to the mindset of the 1990s, when terrorism was seen as a nuisance and was fought with subpoenas and a few cruise missiles.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There’s a major problem with that. The calm—the era of calm he longs for was only a shallow illusion of peace. We now know that throughout the 1990s, the terrorists were training and plotting against us. They saw our complacency as weakness. And so their plans became more ambitious and their attacks became more deadly until, finally, the Twin Towers became Ground Zero and the Pentagon was in flames.

My outlook was changed on September the 11th. A few days after the attacks, I stood with Rudy where buildings fell. I will never forget the evil of our enemy and the suffering of our people. I know we are fighting a war. And I remember the workers in the hardhats there at Ground Zero, yelling at me at the top of their lungs, “Whatever it takes.” A fellow grabbed me by the arm, and he looked me in the eye, and he said, “Do not let me down.” From that day forward, I’ve gotten up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

In a new term, we will finish the work we have started. We will stand against terror and stand for freedom and peace we all want. And on November the 2d, my fellow Americans, I ask you to stand with me.

God bless. On to victory. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:51 p.m. at the Mid-America Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City, and his wife, Judith; entertainer Michael W. Smith; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister John Howard

of Australia; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist network; and Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA, (Ret.), former combatant commander, U.S. Central Command.

Remarks in Davenport, Iowa

October 25, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. It is great to be back in the great city of Davenport, Iowa. Laura and I are—*[applause]*. Thanks for coming. You’ve lifted our spirits today. We really appreciate you being here.

We’re heading down the stretch. I’m here to ask for your vote. I’m here to ask for your help. I need you to go to your friends and neighbors and remind them we have a duty in this great democracy to vote. Don’t overlook discerning Democrats when you get people going to the polls, by the way, people like Senator Zell Miller. Remind your friends and neighbors if they want a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

Laura and I were in the seventh grade together in San Jacinto Junior High, in Midland, Texas, and then we became reacquainted. She was a public school librarian when I met her again. I said, “Will you marry me?” She said, “Fine, if you make me one promise.” I said, “What is it?” “Promise me I’ll never have to give a political speech.” *[Laughter]* I said, “Okay, you’ve got a deal.” *[Laughter]* Fortunately, she didn’t hold me to that promise. She’s giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a strong, compassionate First Lady.

And I’m proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. You know, I’m looking around, and I can see a few folks out there have got the same hairstyle he does. *[Laughter]* I did not pick the Vice President because of his hairdo. *[Laughter]* And I admit, he doesn’t have the waviest hair in the race. *[Laughter]* I picked him because he can get the job done for the American people.

How about Rudy? We love traveling with Rudy. Rudy is a great American. We woke up, and we had breakfast with Rudy and Judith at our place in Crawford. Then we went