

from Afghanistan National Radio and Television. It has been 4 years since the presence of the international forces in Afghanistan. However, the security situation is increasingly deteriorating. What will be your long-term security policy to Afghanistan? And the second part of the question is, how will the U.S. policy be affected in regards to Afghanistan if Usama and Mullah Omar are captured?

President Bush. It's not a matter of if they're captured or brought to justice, it's when they're brought to justice. The United States is here at the request of an Afghan Government elected by the people. We signed an agreement in the Oval Office in Washington, DC, with the duly elected President of your country, President Karzai. It's an agreement that sets out a strategic relationship. It's an important relationship for our country. It's an important relationship for Afghanistan.

But it's important for the people of Afghanistan to recognize that we're here by mutual consent. We want to be here. We want to be here to help Afghanistan grow its democracy and to defeat those who will—can't stand the thought of freedom.

The President has talked to me a lot about this issue, assures me that the Government is sincere in its request that the United States and coalition help Afghanistan grow its democracy. Our commitment is firm. Our desire is to see this country flourish and set a great example not only in the neighborhood but around the world.

See, I hope—I hope people of Afghanistan understand the people of America have great—got great regard for human life and human dignity, that we care about the plight of people. We—when we saw the devastation in Pakistan, we were quick to respond with help because we care about people. When we heard 73,000 people lost their lives and 2.5 million people were displaced from their homes, it broke our hearts. When we see HIV/AIDS ravishing an entire continent of Africa, we care.

I'm going to repeat what I said before: We like stories, and expect stories, of young girls going to school in Afghanistan. It means a lot to the American people to hear the President say that. It means a lot for people to

realize that there is an entrepreneurial class that's beginning to grow. We believe in hope, which is the exact opposite of the ideology of the bin Ladens of the world and the Taliban.

In our country, you can worship freely. You're equally American if you're a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Jew. You're equally American if you don't believe in an Almighty. Under the Taliban and Usama bin Laden, there is no religious freedom. You have no chance to express yourself in the public square without being punished. There is no capacity to realize your full potential. And so we're committed; we're committed to universal values. We believe—we believe everybody desires to be free. And we know that history has taught us that free societies yield peace. And that's what we want. We want peace for our children, and we want peace for the Afghan children as well.

President Karzai. Good. Wonderful. Great. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. A reporter referred to Mullah Omar, head of the deposed Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Remarks at a Dedication Ceremony for the New United States Embassy in Kabul

March 1, 2006

Thank you for the warm welcome. I thought I'd just drop in to cut a ribbon. [Laughter] Ambassador, Laura and I are honored to join you. And Mr. President, thank you for joining us.

The President just hosted a great Afghan lunch. The hospitality of the Afghan people is well known, and I enjoyed that hospitality, Mr. President. Thank you.

I appreciate the Secretary of State joining me. I'm proud to call Condi Rice friend; America is proud to call her Secretary of State. I appreciate Ron Neumann's service. There's nothing wrong with a son following in his father's footsteps. [Laughter] When we

rolled by the old Embassy, he told me that it was his dad that cut the ribbon as the Ambassador from the United States to Afghanistan. And here we are about to open a brand new Embassy with a proud son and a great representative of our country, Ambassador Ron Neumann, cutting the ribbon.

History sometimes spins an interesting tale, doesn't it, and such a tale is being spun today of public service. I want to thank all of my fellow citizens for working so far away from home on an incredibly important mission. I want to thank the Embassy personnel, as well as our United States military personnel for being on the frontline of freedom's march. I know it's a hard job, away from your families—a long way from your families, having just flown 17 hours to get here.

But it's a vital mission. It's historic in its nature. This is the kind of mission that someday, the Secretary of State will be speaking to Foreign Service officers and relaying the stories and the tales and the toils of those who served in Afghanistan in 2006. And so I congratulate you on your hard work, and I thank you on behalf of a grateful nation.

I also want to thank the Foreign Service nationals who are here as well, those citizens of Afghanistan who are helping our folks to accomplish a big mission. I am struck by the story that our Embassy was kept open and guarded during the days of the Taliban. And when Afghanistan was liberated, there were Afghan nationals here to turn over the keys to the Embassy. For those of you who are guarding our Embassy, thank you. For those of you who carry on their legacy, I thank you as well. We welcome your help; we're honored with your presence today.

I've been honored to welcome Afghan citizens to Washington on a fairly regular basis. Laura and I have hosted brave men and women, who are dedicated to democracy and freedom, in Washington. One thing they always ask me—they ask me with their words, and they ask me with their stares, as they look into my eyes—is the United States firmly committed to the future of Afghanistan? That's what they want to know. My answer is, "Absolutely." It's in our Nation's interest that Afghanistan develop into a democracy. It's in the interests of the United States of America for there to be examples around the

world of what is possible. That it's possible to replace tyrants with a free society in which men and women are respected, in which young girls can go to school to realize their full potential, in which people are able to realize their dreams.

And so my message to the people of Afghanistan is, take a look at this building. It's a big, solid, permanent structure, which should represent the commitment of the United States of America to your liberty. I firmly believe the work that we're doing together is laying the foundation of peace for generations to come. And I want to thank you for sharing that mission.

May God bless America and you and your families, and may God's blessings rain on the good people of Afghanistan.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

Remarks to United States and Coalition Troops at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan *March 1, 2006*

Thanks for having us. Laura and I are honored to be here in Afghanistan with you. It's a real pleasure to be with our country's finest citizens. I want to thank General Eikenberry and General Freakley and all those who are taking responsibility to make sure we complete our mission.

I particularly want to thank the members of the United States Army and Marines and Air Force and Navy who are here. Laura and I thank the civilian contractors who are here. I—really pleased to be with the 10th Mountain Division—"Climb to Glory."

I know it's not easy to be away from home, but I want you to understand that you're on the frontier of freedom, that you're involved with doing two important things: One is finding an enemy and bringing them to justice so they don't hurt our fellow citizens again. That mission requires steadfast determination. The enemy cannot defeat us militarily. The only thing they can do is to kill innocent lives and try to shake our will. But they don't understand the United States of America. We will never be intimidated by thugs and