

The effective performance of the Iraqi security forces during this crisis showed that our hard work to build up and train these forces is paying off. In the coming months, we will help prepare more Iraqi battalions to take the lead in battle, and Iraqi forces will assume responsibility over more territory. Our goal is to have the Iraqis control more territory than the coalition forces by the end of this year. And as Iraqis assume responsibility over more territory, this frees American and coalition forces to concentrate on hunting down high-value targets like the terrorist Zarqawi and his associates.

As we take the fight to the terrorists, they realize they cannot defeat us directly in battle, so they have resorted to brutal attacks against innocent Iraqis and American forces using improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. IEDs are homemade bombs that can be hidden in cars or by the side of a road and detonated remotely, using everyday devices like garage door openers and cordless phones.

These weapons are now the principal threat to our troops and to the future of a free Iraq. And to defeat this threat, my administration has established a new high-level command at the Department of Defense, led by retired four-star General Montgomery Meigs. This weekend General Meigs is briefing me at the White House on our plan to defeat the threat of IEDs. We're harnessing every available resource, the ingenuity of our best scientists and engineers, and the determination of our military to defeat this threat. And we're not going to rest until this danger to our troops has been removed.

In the coming days, there will be considerable reflection on the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and our remaining mission in Iraq. The last 3 years have tested our resolve. The fighting has been tough. The enemy we face has proved to be brutal and relentless. We have changed our approach in many areas to reflect the hard realities on the ground. And the sacrifice being made by our young men and women who wear the uniform has been heartening and inspiring.

Amid the daily news of car bombs and kidnappings and brutal killings, I can understand why many of our fellow citizens are now wondering if the entire mission was worth it. I strongly believe our country is bet-

ter off with Saddam Hussein out of power. Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq was an enemy of America who shot at our airplanes, had a history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction, threatened and invaded his neighbors, ordered the death of thousands of his citizens, and supported terrorism.

After the liberation of the Iraqi people, Al Qaida and their affiliates have made Iraq the central front on the war on terror. By helping the Iraqi people build a free and representative government, we will deny the terrorists a safe haven to plan attacks against America. The security of our country is directly linked to the liberty of the Iraqi people. This will require more difficult days of fighting and sacrifice, yet I am confident that our strategy will result in victory, and then our troops can come home with the honor they have earned.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 a.m. on March 10 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 11. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 10 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Montgomery C. Meigs, director, Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda of Slovakia

March 13, 2006

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. Thank you for coming. I always enjoy being with you because you're an optimistic, upbeat believer in the people of your country and the possibilities to work together to achieve peace. And so thanks for coming.

I admire the job you have done, and I admire the record that you have produced. A lot of times in politics, people are pretty good talkers, but they don't follow through. You have followed through.

We discussed a lot of issues. I thank the Prime Minister for his contributions to helping young democracies succeed, democracies

in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I want to thank you for that.

We discussed the importance for transatlantic ties between the United States and not only Slovakia but also between the United States and Europe. And I assured him that those transatlantic ties are an important part of our policies here.

We talked about two issues that I found—that I know are important. One, of course, is the visa issue. The Prime Minister made it very clear that he expects there to be some progress on the visa issue, that he's—he represents the good people of Slovakia when he says to me that there needs to be a constant renewal of the process to make sure that it is fair. And I appreciate—I listened very carefully to my friend and can assure the people of Slovakia that we are working together to make the visa policy work better.

Secondly, he talked about the knowledge-based economy that he envisioned for his country. And I thought, first of all, it's very wise to—he recognizes the world and the challenges of the world and knows full well that as people gain knowledge, a country is going to end up being more competitive in the 21st century.

And so I—we strategized about ways to help Slovakia and the United States benefit from exchanges, and particularly student exchanges, so that knowledge becomes a paramount part of our future.

And so, Mr. Prime Minister, thanks for your vision. And I also feel sorry for the fact that you broke your leg. This guy's a good runner. And so now I feel comfortable challenging you to a race. [Laughter] Had you been healthy, I wouldn't even had gotten on the same track with you. But I wish you a speedy recovery, and thanks again for coming to the United States.

Prime Minister Dzurinda. Thank you, Mr. President. My leg is broken, but my heart is happy. [Laughter] My heart is happy because we are friends and strong allies, America and Slovakia, America and the European Union. I am happy being here because we are good friends. President Bush visited us a year ago; he visited President of Russia, Mr. Putin, in Bratislava, and we remember this fantastic stay of President Bush in Slovakia.

We are good friends, and we share the responsibility for development in the world. I highly appreciate the leadership of President Bush in solving of global issues, the most hot and most complicated issues in the world. And I talked to President Bush that transatlantic cooperation is and must stay the basis of our security. This is something like axis of stability, prosperity, and the future of both countries, but also the future of the democratic world.

As President Bush has already mentioned, we have some bilateral issues. I appreciate especially his State of Union, during which he announced a new program how to educate people, young generation. We want to do the same. We want to find a new way, thanks to which it would be possible to cooperate with the United States also in the area of science research and development, innovation, education. And I believe that we will discover these new ways.

Of course we spoke many issues of foreign policy, as usually. And I can only tell that our view is the same, and we will continue in this cooperation to advance freedom and democracy in the world. Mr. President, thank you very, very much for being such a good leader.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Dzurinda referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Remarks to the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies

March 13, 2006

Thanks for the warm welcome. Cliff, thanks for the introduction. It's a pleasure to be with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. This organization was formed in the wake of the September the 11th attacks to fight the ideologies that drive terrorism. You recognized immediately that the war on terror is a struggle between freedom and tyranny and that the path to lasting security is to defeat the hateful vision the terrorists are spreading with the hope of freedom and democracy.