

which can be achieved by passage of national law; and the other kind is the bottom-up reconciliation, where people in neighborhoods are just—who are sick and tired of criminality and violence say, “Look, let’s do something about it.”

That’s—one of the interesting things, Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News], and you follow this a lot closer than a lot of these other folks have—not to be blowing your horn or anything, but—is these concerned citizen groups—CLCs, people who have stepped forward and said, we’ve had enough of this; we’re sick and tired of violence. Some 80,000 local citizens who are now helping provide local security so their children can have—grow up in a free society and they can be peaceful—that’s what you’re seeing. And a part of the Iraqi surge was not only 100,000 additional troops and police but local citizens coming forward and to—helping to provide security for their neighborhoods. And that’s bottom-up reconciliation.

I’m not making excuses for a government, but to go from a tyranny to a democracy overnight is virtually impossible. And so when you say, am I pleased with the progress—what they have gone through and where they are today I think is good progress. Have they done enough? No. Are we going to continue to work with them to do more? Absolutely. Absolutely. Our message is very clear: It’s in your interest that you pass good law. And so I’m optimistic they’ll get laws passed here pretty quick, and we’ll continue to press to make it happen.

Listen, thank you very much. I’m going to speak to the troops, and I’m looking forward to it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait.

Remarks to Military Personnel at Camp Arifjan

January 12, 2008

The President. Hooah!

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Yes, thanks for coming out. [Laughter] It’s good to see you. Command Sergeant Major Harbin, thank—he’s a silver-tongued fox. [Laughter] Thank you for the introduction, Command Sergeant. I’m honored to be introduced by one of our enlisted personnel. After all, our military is strong because of the sergeant corps of the military.

I’m also proud to be with our officers. I particularly want to thank General Lovelace for his leadership. I’m honored to be with the brave men and women of the 3d Army. I also offer greetings to the marines, sailors, airmen, coast guardsmen—

Audience member. Woo-hoo! [Laughter]

The President. —as well as all the Department of Army civilians—

Audience member. Hooray! [Laughter]

The President. I’m here to thank you for your service. I want you to know, the American people are mighty proud of you, and so am I. Sorry my wife is not with me. She was here the other day, though. She sends her best. I’m traveling today with the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. I just had a meeting with our Ambassador and our commander on the ground in Iraq. I’m proud to be here with Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus.

Since the 3d Army was established at the close of World War I, its soldiers have proven themselves true to their motto, “The Third . . . Always First.” You’re the first bunch I’ve been talking to here on my trip, first bunch of those wearing the uniform. People say, “You looking forward to the trip?” I said, one thing I’m really looking forward to is seeing the men and women who represent the United States in our military. The reason I am is—anxious to be here is because we can’t thank you enough and we can’t thank your families enough for doing the hard work necessary to protect the United States of America.

I appreciate what this 3d Army did in World War II. I hope you do too as well. After all, you’re members of Patton’s own; played a vital role in the destruction of the Nazi war machine. They helped liberate about 12,000 towns; at least that’s according to the history of the 3d Army. From their noble ranks came soldiers with some of our

Nation's highest directors [decorations],* including 19 recipients of the Medal of Honor. You—a distinguished history, and you're making history yourselves. Sometimes it's hard to forecast what the history pages are going to see when you're right in the midst of it all. Sometimes it's hard to judge how the 3d Army will be talked about by future Presidents when you're in the midst of protecting the country, when you're in the midst of dealing in a dangerous region.

But I want to tell you what the history will say. The history will say, it was when you were called upon, you served, and the service you rendered was absolutely necessary to defeat an enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. It will say loud and clear that this military, comprised of brave men and women who sacrificed on behalf of a noble cause called peace—the men and women of this military understood that we're in an ideological struggle; that we're facing coldblooded murderers who kill the innocent to achieve their hateful vision of a future.

And they understood, history will show that those who wore the uniform in the beginning of the 21st century understood a timeless truth: that the ideology of—based upon liberty is necessary for peace; that in this ideological struggle, on the short term, we will find and bring the enemies to justice. But in the long term, the best way to defeat the ideology of hate is one with an ideology of hope, and that's one with liberty at its fundamental core.

It's hard work that you're doing, but it's necessary work. It's hard to be away from your home, but that's a soldier's life. When you get to e-mailing your family, you tell them I check in with you. [Laughter] And you're looking pretty good. It looks like you haven't missed a meal. [Laughter] But you also tell them that the message I brought was, they're in this fight as well. And the citizens of the United States of America respect our military, and we respect our military families. And this Government will make sure that our families have a good life, with good support, when you're deployed overseas.

* White House correction.

And so I thank you for what you're doing. There is no doubt in my mind that we will succeed. There is no doubt in my mind, when history was written, the final page will say, victory was achieved by the United States of America for the good of the world; that by doing the hard work now, we can look back and say, the United States of America is more secure and generations of Americans will be able to live in peace.

God bless you, and God bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Command Sgt. Maj. Don Harbin, USA, command sergeant major, Area Support Group—Kuwait; Lt. Gen. James L. Lovelace, USA, commanding general, 3d Army; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks Prior to a Discussion on Democracy and Development With Kuwaiti Women in Kuwait City, Kuwait

January 12, 2008

The President. I want to thank these ladies from Kuwait for joining me and the Charge. I'm really looking forward to the conversation. Laura had met with some before and came back very impressed by the spirit and desire of Kuwaiti women to be full participants in Kuwaiti society.

First, I'd like to thank His Highness for his hospitality. Secondly, last night in a conversation with His Highness, I said, "Any regrets about having women vote in elections and run for elections?" He said, "Absolutely not." He said, "Our society is enriched by the participation of our women." And he's right. All societies are enriched by the participation of women. I happen to believe very strongly in the freedom agenda, and I think an integral part of that agenda is making sure that all participants in society have got an equal voice.

And one of the interesting—I think when people look back at the history of the Middle East and history of the world, it's going to be women who helped lead the freedom agenda. And it's happening right here in Kuwait. We've had people here at the table who