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George W. Bush

The White House,
July 30, 2008.

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NOTE: This Executive order was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 31, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on August 4.

Remarks on the War on Terror

July 31, 2008

Good morning. This has been a month of encouraging news from Iraq. Violence is down to its lowest level since the spring of 2004, and we're now in our third consecutive month with reduced violence levels holding steady. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker caution that the progress is still reversible, but they report that there now appears to be a degree of durability to the gains that we have made.

A significant reason for this sustained progress is the success of the surge. Another is the increasing capability of the Iraqi forces. Iraqi forces now have 192 combat battalions in the fight, and more than 110 of these battalions are taking the lead in combat operations against terrorists and extremists.

We saw the capability of those forces earlier this year, when the Iraqi Government launched successful military operations against Shi'a extremist groups in Basra, Amarah, and the Sadr City area of Baghdad. Because of these operations, extremists who once terrorized the citizens of these communities have been driven from their strongholds. As a result, our Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, was able to walk the streets of Sadr City last Wednesday. That's something that would not have been possible just a few months ago.

This week, the Iraqi Government is launching a new offensive in parts of the Diyala Province that contain some of Al Qaida's few remaining safe havens in the country. This operation is Iraqi-led; our forces are playing a supporting role. And in the moments—in the months ahead, the Iraqis will continue taking the lead in more military operations across the country.

As security in Iraq has improved, the Iraqi Government has made political progress as well. The Iraqi Council of Representatives has passed several major pieces of legislation this year, and Iraqi leaders are preparing for Provincial elections. Prime Minister Maliki recently returned from a successful visit to Europe, where he held important diplomatic discussions with Chancellor Merkel, Prime Minister Berlusconi, and His Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI.

The progress in Iraq has allowed us to continue our policy of return on success. We now have brought home all five of the combat brigades and the three Marine units that were sent to Iraq as part of the surge. The last of these surge brigades returned home this month. And later this year, General Petraeus will present me his recommendations on future troop levels, including further reductions in our combat forces as conditions permit.

As part of the return on success policy, we are also reducing the length of combat tours in Iraq. Beginning tomorrow, troops deploying to Iraq will serve 12-month tours instead of 15-month tours. This will ease the burden on our forces, and it will make life easier for our wonderful military families.

We're also making progress in our discussion with Prime Minister Maliki's Government on the—a strategic framework agreement. This agreement will serve as the foundation for America's presence in Iraq once the United Nations resolution authorizing the multi-national forces there expires on December the 31st.

We remain a nation at war. Al Qaida is on the run in Iraq, but the terrorists remain dangerous, and they are determined to strike our country and our allies again. In this time of war, America is grateful to all the men and women who have stepped forward to defend us. They understand that we have no greater responsibility than to stop the terrorists before they launch yet another attack on our homeland. Every day they make great sacrifices to keep the American people safe here at home. We owe our thanks to all those who wear the uniform and their families who

support them in their vital work. And the best way to honor them is to support their mission and bring them home with victory.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:04 a.m. on the Colonnade at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; and Pope Benedict XVI. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to the West Virginia Coal Association in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia

July 31, 2008

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thank you for your warm introduction. I have come to know your State very well. I've spent a lot of quality time here. I love its beauty, and I love its people. And I thank you for your warm greeting, and I'm proud to be here in Greenbrier.

This place has got a rich history. During the cold war, this was Congress's designated meeting place in case of an emergency in Washington. Also the site of three championship golf courses. [*Laughter*] You get to decide whether or not that was just a coincidence. [*Laughter*]

I want to talk about the energy today. No better group of people to talk about energy with than people who actually take risk to find energy. I'm—like you, I'm concerned about the price of gasoline people are paying. I know you're concerned about what it means for your workers. It's like a tax on the hard-working people here in America. So I'll spend a little time on that subject.

And I'm going to talk about the fact that this country needs a commonsense, realistic energy policy, that there's not a single solution, and that we got to work to have a comprehensive plan that takes advantage of our assets and is realistic and provides a hopeful future for our citizens.

As you know, I'm fixing to retire—[*laughter*]—in about 6 months. But I am going to sprint to the finish. And part of that sprint to the finish will be to continue to remind the American people that we need to be realistic and have common sense about today's energy needs and tomorrow's energy needs.

And I want to thank my friend Buck Harless for inviting me here. He's right: He came down to the Governor's mansion; came down just to take a sniff. [*Laughter*] And I appreciate his friendship and your friendship. I want to thank Andrew Jordon, who is the chairman of the board of the West Virginia Coal Association. I want to thank all the other members of the board, and I want to thank you as risk takers and entrepreneurs and dreamers and doers and job providers. And I welcome your family members who are here too. Thanks for coming. It's good to be with old and young alike. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Bill Raney, my friend. I've known Bill a long time; he's a good guy. And Bill, I want to thank you for being here today. You can applaud for Bill if you want.

I'm so pleased to be traveling with Congressman Nick Rahall today. I can't thank him enough. The Congress is in session. He's a—he's got a chairmanship, and yet he took time to come down to fly down on Air Force One. I can't thank you enough—it's not a bad way to travel, by the way. [*Laughter*] But I appreciate you coming, Nick.

I thank—want to thank the Secretary of State Betty Ireland. Betty has served this State with a lot of dignity. She came down from Charleston to encourage her old buddy—me. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank the mayor, Debbie Fogus. Madam Mayor, thank you for being here today as well; all the other State and local officials who have kindly come. But most importantly, thank you.

This is a—it's a challenging time. It's not the first time we've been through challenging times. I might remind you that in the beginning of my Presidency there were some challenging times. We had a recession, and of course, we got attacked. And yet, with good policy, and by trusting the ingenuity and the enterprise of the American people, we came through those times better than before. We'll come—the same thing is going to happen this time.