

all Americans, were set up by God, intended for all people. Bondage is not of God, and it is not right that any man should be in bondage at any time, in any way." Everyone in this room can say amen to that.

There's another part of our heritage we are showing in Iraq, and that is the great American tradition of religious tolerance. The Iraqi people are mostly Muslims, and we respect the faith they practice. Our troops in Iraq have helped to refurbish mosques, have treated Muslim clerics with deference, and are mindful of Islam's holy days. Some of our troops are Muslims themselves, because America welcomes people of every faith. Christians and Jews and Muslims have too often been divided by old suspicions, but we are called to act as what we are, the sons and daughters of Abraham.

Our work in a troubled part of the world goes on, and what we have begun, we will finish. In the years of challenge, our country will remain strong and strong of heart. And as we meet whatever test might come, let us never be too proud to acknowledge our dependence on Providence and to take our cares to God.

I want to thank you for continuing this fine annual tradition and for your hospitality. May God bless you, and may He always watch over our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 a.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joe Gibbs, head coach, Washington Redskins, National Football League; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; and Senators James M. Inhofe and Bill Nelson, co-chairmen, National Prayer Breakfast.

Remarks at the Port of Charleston, South Carolina *February 5, 2004*

Thank you all very much. Thank you all. I am glad to be back in the great State of South Carolina. I appreciate you all coming out. I'm so honored to have been invited to one of America's great cities, Charleston, South Carolina.

This is one of the busiest container ports in our country. It's an important hub of commerce. And we will work to make sure that not only is the port strong for economic reasons; we will make sure that the port defends the people, is ready to defend against the threats of a new era, that this port is secure and safe for not only the people of South Carolina but for the people of the great United States of America.

I appreciate my friend Tom Ridge for becoming the first Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. He's got a big job, and he's doing it well.

I want to thank Governor Mark Sanford for greeting me at the airport and for driving with me to the Port of Charleston. Mark is doing a great job for the people of South Carolina. I know that the Lieutenant Governor is with us today, Lieutenant Governor Andre Bauer. I appreciate you coming, Andre.

I flew down on Air Force One with some of the members of the mighty South Carolina congressional delegation, starting with Senator Lindsey Graham. He was telling me what to do during the entire flight. *[Laughter]* I appreciate so very much Congressman Jim DeMint, Congressman Joe Wilson, Congressman Gresham Barrett, and the Congressman from this district, Henry Brown, for joining us as well. These are good, honorable citizens. They're working hard in Washington, DC, on behalf of the people of South Carolina. I'm proud to call

them friend. I'm proud to work with them for the good of the country.

I appreciate the mayor, Joe Riley, being here today. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. You're the mayor of a great city. Last time I saw the mayor, he said, "Need I remind you that your mother was educated in this great city." [Laughter] No, you didn't need to remind me, Mr. Mayor. She reminds me all the time. [Laughter]

I appreciate my friend Speaker David Wilkins, who has joined us. All the members of the statehouse who are here, thanks for coming, State and local officials.

I want to thank the members of the—oh of course, my friend the Adjutant General, Stan Spears, is with us today. General, it's good to see you again. I appreciate Commander Gary Merrick, Captain Jim Tunstall of the mighty Coast Guard. I appreciate their service here, and I want to thank the members of the Coast Guard who are with us. I'm proud of the men and women of our Coast Guard, who are always ready—always ready to protect the American people.

I want to thank the members of the Air Force 437th Airlift Wing who are with us today. I appreciate the members of the United States Navy who are with us today. I thank the cadets from the Citadel who have joined us today.

I want to thank the employees of the Department of Homeland Security. Thank you for your work. Thank you for your dedication. Thank you for what you're doing to make this part of the world as safe and secure as you can.

I want to thank South Carolina's State and local first-responders who are with us, the police and the firefighters and the emergency squad personnel.

But most of all, thank you for coming. I've got some things I want to talk about. [Laughter] This country is a strong country, and we're rising to meet great challenges.

The first great challenge is to make sure people can find work. The first great challenge of this country is to have a progrowth

environment so people can find a job. Our economy is growing. It's getting better, but I want to remind you of where we have come from. See, people say, "President Bush is optimistic." You bet I'm optimistic. I know where we have been, and I know where we're going.

We have—this country went through a recession. And as we were coming out of the recession, we got attacked. And make no mistake about it, that attack hurt our country's economy. It also—you'll hear me talk about how it affected my view of national security as well. It hurt.

And as we began to recover from that, we discovered that some of our fellow citizens forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. In other words, they didn't tell the truth. They didn't tell the truth to their employees, and they didn't tell the truth to their shareholders. And that affected the confidence of our economy. By the way, we passed laws to hold those corporate criminals to account. They will understand now that there is a consequence for not telling the truth.

And then, of course, there were the uncertainties of war. That affected the economy. Yet we're still strong, in spite of the hurdles. And one reason we're strong is because we acted in Washington, DC. We passed tax relief. You see, we understand that when somebody has got more money in their pocket, they're more likely to demand a good or a service. And when they demand that good or a service, somebody is more likely to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces that good or a service, someone is more likely to be able to find work. The tax relief we passed, the willingness to have people have more money in their pocket to spend, to save, or invest, is helping this economy recover from tough times.

We also understand that most new jobs are created by small businesses. Most new jobs in the American economy are created by the entrepreneurs and small-business owners of America. And so the tax relief

we passed not only helped individuals and helped families raise children, but it was also directed at the small-business sector of our economy. We must never forget the vital role that small businesses play in the United States economy.

Things are looking good across the country. New home construction in 2003 was the highest in 25 years. Homeownership rates are the highest ever. And for the first time, most minority households own their own homes. We're closing the housing gap in America. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Exports are growing. Productivity is high. Jobs are on the rise. The tax relief we passed has made a difference.

One of the things I know about your great State—I've spent some quality time in South Carolina in the past—one of the things I know about your great State is this is a State full of decent, hard-working, honorable people. You've got a great workforce in the State of South Carolina. Many foreign companies and companies from other States move here because South Carolina workers are dependable, good people.

Yet, the State has got economic challenges. Even though the unemployment rate is down, it's still too high. Many factory workers in textiles and apparel have faced layoffs. But there are new jobs being created, and the challenge at all levels of government is to make sure that people are trained for jobs which actually exist.

I laid out what's called the Jobs for the 21st Century program, which says to States and local communities, "We want to help you. We want to help you make sure the hard-working people who are looking for work have got the skills necessary to take advantage of a changing economy." The numbers aren't as good as they can be, but they will be with focused efforts. They will be so long as Washington promotes a pro-entrepreneur, pro-growth agenda. They will be if the Congress makes sure the tax cuts we passed are permanent.

I'm optimistic about our economy's future because the numbers look good, but that's not the true reason I'm optimistic. I'm optimistic because I understand the entrepreneurial spirit of America. I'm optimistic because I know the type of worker we have in this country. I'm optimistic because I trust the American people.

The second great challenge is to fight and win the war on terror. After we were attacked in 2001, I said time would pass and people would assume that the threats to our country had gone away. That's false comfort. The terrorists continue to plot against us. They still want to harm us. This Nation will not tire; we will not rest until this threat to civilization is removed.

Part of doing our duty in the war on terror is to protect the homeland. That's part of our solemn responsibility, and we are taking unprecedented steps to protect the homeland. In the 2005 budget, as the Secretary mentioned, we proposed increases in homeland security spending, and some of those increases are measures to protect our seaports. And that's why I've come to this vital seaport, to remind people—to remind the American people, as they pay attention to the debates in the Halls of Congress, that we have a solemn duty to protect our homeland, including the seaports of America.

Our National Targeting Center in Northern Virginia, where I'll be going tomorrow with the Secretary, is analyzing cargo manifest information and focusing frontline inspection on high-risk shipments. We're looking at things differently now in America. We're adjusting our strategies to better protect the American people.

We've got a Container Security Initiative, which means we're posting officers at foreign ports to identify and inspect high-risk shipments before they're loaded and shipped to America. We've extended the reach out to make sure America is more secure. We're doing things more wise in order to protect our country. We're not waiting for ships and planes to arrive.

We've got what we call a Proliferation Security Initiative, fancy words which means America is working with other governments to track and stop the shipments of dangerous weapons and dangerous cargo. We're determined to keep lethal weapons and materials out of the hands of our enemies and away from our shores.

We have a duty to protect the American people, a solemn duty. And there's a lot of people in this crowd who have heard that duty, and I appreciate your service. I appreciate your willingness to sacrifice on behalf of the people.

Another vital tool in the homeland security is for Congress to pass laws that enable us to do our job. I'm referring to the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act gives Federal law enforcement the tools they need to seize terrorists' assets and disrupt their cells. It removes—the PATRIOT Act removed legal barriers that prevented the FBI and the CIA from sharing information, information that is vitally needed to uncover terrorist plots before they are carried out in America. Imagine a system that would not allow people who collect information to share information. It makes it awfully hard to protect the homeland if the FBI and the CIA can't share data in order to protect us. The PATRIOT Act made that possible.

The PATRIOT Act imposes tougher penalties on terrorists and their supporters. We want to send a clear message to people that there will be a consequence. For years, we've used similar provisions, provisions that are now in the act, to catch embezzlers and drug traffickers. What's in the PATRIOT Act today is nothing new. We've been using these provisions in the past. If the methods are good enough for hunting criminals, they're even more important for hunting terrorists. The Congress needs to extend the PATRIOT Act.

We'll do everything in our power to defend the homeland. Yet, we understand this, that the best way to defend the homeland is to stay on the offensive. The best

way to protect America is to find the killers and bring them to justice before they ever harm another American, and that's exactly what this administration will continue to do.

There are thousands of our troops and troops of our friends on an international manhunt. We're running down Al Qaida. We're finding them where they hide. For our own security, we're bringing them to justice. Nearly two-thirds of the Al Qaida leaders have been captured or killed. And we're chasing the rest of them. There is no hole deep enough to hide from America.

Part of this new war, this different kind of war, is to confront regimes that harbor terrorists, that support terrorists, that could supply them with weapons of mass murder. This is an essential part of the war on terror. When America speaks, we better mean what we say. And I said right after September the 11th, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists," and the Taliban found out exactly what we meant.

It wasn't all that long ago that Afghanistan was a haven for terrorists. This is where many terrorists learned to kill. There were training camps, places for them to hide. Thanks to the United States and our friends, thanks to the bravery of many of our fellow citizens, Afghanistan is no longer a haven for terror. Afghanistan is a free country.

America also confronted a gathering threat in Iraq. The dictatorship of Saddam Hussein was one of the most brutal, corrupt, and dangerous regimes in the world. For years, the dictator funded terrorists and gave reward money for suicide bombings. For years, he threatened and he invaded his neighbors. For years, he murdered innocent Iraqis by the hundreds of thousands. For years, he made a mockery of United Nations demands that he account for his weapons. For years, Saddam Hussein did all these things. But he won't be doing any of them this year. Instead, he's sitting

in a prison cell, and he will be sitting in a courtroom to answer for his crimes.

The liberation of Iraq was an act of justice, delivering an oppressed people from an evil regime. The liberation of Iraq removed a source of violence and instability from the Middle East, and the liberation of Iraq removed an enemy of this country and made America more secure.

America and our friends have shown the world that we are serious about removing the threats of weapons of mass destruction, and the facts are becoming clearer. In Iraq, our Survey Group is on the ground, looking for the truth. We will compare what the intelligence indicated before the war with what we have learned afterwards. As the chief weapons inspector said, "We have not yet found the stockpiles of weapons that we thought were there." Yet, the Survey Group has uncovered some of what the dictator was up to.

We know Saddam Hussein had the capability to produce weapons of mass destruction. He had the scientists and technology in place to make those weapons. We know he had the necessary infrastructure to produce weapons of mass destruction because we found the labs and dual use facilities that could be used to produce chemical and biological weapons. We know he was developing the delivery systems, ballistic missiles that the United Nations had prohibited. We know Saddam Hussein had the intent to arm his regime with weapons of mass destruction, because he hid all those activities from the world until the last day of his regime.

And Saddam Hussein had something else; he had a record of using weapons of mass destruction against his enemies and against innocent Iraqi citizens. Knowing what I knew then and knowing what I know today, America did the right thing in Iraq.

We had a choice: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend the American people. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time. Sep-

tember the 11th, 2001, was a lesson for America, a lesson I will never forget and a lesson this Nation must never forget. We cannot wait to confront the threats of the world, the threats of terror networks and terror states, until those threats arrive in our own cities. I made a pledge to this country; I will not stand by and hope for the best while dangers gather. I will not take risks with the lives and security of the American people. I will protect and defend this country by taking the fight to the enemy.

When you're the Commander in Chief, you have to be willing to make the tough calls and to see your decisions through. America is safer when our commitments are clear, our word is good, and our will is strong. And that is the only way I know how to lead.

If some politicians in Washington had their way, Saddam Hussein would still be in power. All of the Security Council resolutions and condemnations would still be issued and still be ignored, scraps of paper amounting to nothing. Other regimes and terror networks, had we not acted, would have concluded that America backs down when things get tough. Saddam would still have his weapons capabilities, and life would sure be different for the Iraqi people. The secret police would still be making arrests in the middle of the night. Prisons and torture chambers would still be filled with victims. More innocent Iraqis would have been sent to mass graves. Because we acted, Iraq's nightmare is over. Their country, our country, and the entire world are better off because the regime of Saddam Hussein is gone and gone forever.

Because of American leadership, the world is changing for the better. Other dictators have seen and noted our resolve. Colonel Qadhafi in Libya got the message and is now voluntarily disclosing and eliminating his weapons of mass destruction programs.

These are historic times, times of change. In Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50 million people once lived under tyranny. And now they live in free societies, societies that are moving toward democracy, societies that will set an example for all of the Middle East. And that's important. That's important for our own security. Free societies do not attack their neighbors. Free societies do not develop weapons of mass terror. Freedom and peace go hand in hand. These are great and hopeful events, and they came about because America and our allies acted bravely in the cause of freedom.

We know there are challenges ahead. We know that freedom still has enemies in Iraq and Afghanistan, surviving Ba'athists, the Taliban, suicide bombers, and foreign terrorists. All these enemies have one goal: They want to stop the advance of freedom and to shake the will of the United States of America. But they don't understand us. They don't understand the nature of the American people. We will never be intimidated by thugs or assassins. The killers will fail, and the people of Iraq and Afghanistan will live in freedom. And that's important to us in America, because we understand freedom is not America's gift to the world. We understand freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

South Carolina is a State that is really proud of the people who wear the uniform. Over 5,000 reservists and National Guardsmen are currently deploying in Iraq and Afghanistan and Kosovo and for the defense of the homeland. Hundreds of officers from the Citadel are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere in the war on terror. Like everyone who serves in uniform today, these fine citizens of your State are protecting this Nation from danger, and they're making us proud.

I made a commitment to the men and women of our military: America is asking a lot of you, and you deserve a lot in re-

turn. You deserve our praise and our thanks, and we will give you the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror.

So we depend on our military; our people in uniform depend on their families. These are challenging times for military families. Some of them have experienced great loss. We ask for God's blessings. We ask God to give them strength in their time of grief. Our Nation will never take their sacrifice for granted. All of us are grateful to the families of the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States.

By the unselfish dedication of Americans in uniform, people in our own country and in lands far away can live in freedom and know that—the peace that freedom brings. America has been given great responsibilities, and those responsibilities have come to the right country. By our actions, we have shown what kind of nation we are, a good and just and generous people. We don't shrink from any challenge. We're rising to the call of history. Now and in the future, this great land will lead the cause of freedom and peace.

May God bless you all. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. at the Union Pier Terminal. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mark Sanford and Lt. Gov. R. Andre Bauer of South Carolina; Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, SC; David H. Wilkins, speaker, South Carolina House of Representatives; Maj. Gen. Stanhope S. Spears, Adjutant General of South Carolina; Comdr. Gary W. Merrick, USCG, commanding officer, Coast Guard Marine Safety Office, Charleston, SC; Capt. Jim Tunstall, USCG, commander, USCG Group Charleston; David Kay, former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya.

Remarks on Establishment of the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction
February 6, 2004

Good afternoon. Today, by Executive order, I am creating an independent Commission, chaired by Governor and former Senator Chuck Robb, Judge Laurence Silberman, to look at American intelligence capabilities, especially our intelligence about weapons of mass destruction.

Last week, our former chief weapons inspector, David Kay, reported that Saddam Hussein's regime had weapons programs and activities in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and was a gathering threat to the world. Dr. Kay also stated that some prewar intelligence assessments by America and other nations about Iraq's weapons stockpiles have not been confirmed. We are determined to figure out why. We're also determined to make sure that American intelligence is as accurate as possible for every challenge in the future.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses the most serious of dangers to the peace of the world. Chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists or terror regimes could bring catastrophic harm to America and to our friends. It is the policy of the United States Government to oppose that threat by any means necessary. Our efforts against proliferation begin with and depend upon accurate and thorough intelligence.

The men and women of our intelligence community and intelligence officers who work for our friends and allies around the world are dedicated professionals engaged in difficult and complex work. America's enemies are secretive. They are ruthless, and they are resourceful. And in tracking and disrupting their activities, our Nation must bring to bear every tool and advantage at our command.

In Iraq, America and our coalition enforced the clearly stated demands of the

world, that a violent regime prove its own disarmament. In the aftermath of September the 11th, 2001, I will not take risks with the lives and security of the American people by assuming the good will of dictators.

And now, as we move forward in our efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, we must stay ahead of constantly changing intelligence challenges. The stakes for our country could not be higher, and our standard of intelligence gathering and analysis must be equal to that of the challenge.

The Commission I have appointed today will examine intelligence on weapons of mass destruction and related 21st century threats and issue specific recommendations to ensure our capabilities are strong. The Commission will compare what the Iraq Survey Group learns with the information we had prior to our Operation Iraqi Freedom. It will review our intelligence on weapons programs in countries such as North Korea and Iran. It will examine our intelligence on the threats posed by Libya and Afghanistan before recent changes in those countries. Members of the Commission will issue their report by March 31st, 2005.

I've ordered all departments and agencies, including our intelligence agencies, to assist the Commission's work. The Commission will have full access to the findings of the Iraq Survey Group.

In naming this Commission—these men as Cochairmen of the Commission, I'm also naming today Senator John McCain; Lloyd Cutler, former White House Counsel to Presidents Carter and Clinton; Rick Levin, the president of Yale University; Admiral Bill Studeman, the former Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Judge Pat Wald, a former judge on the DC Court