

these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate.

The President's Radio Address *May 21, 2005*

Good morning. Today I can report to you that we are making good progress in advancing the cause of freedom, defeating the forces of terror, and transforming our military so we can meet the emerging threats of the 21st century. As I speak, Laura is in the Middle East to help advance the freedom agenda, and her message is a powerful one, that by working together for liberty, we will create a future of peace and opportunity for women and men worldwide.

On Monday, I will meet Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the White House to discuss freedom's remarkable progress in his nation. Afghanistan now has a constitution and an elected President, and its citizens will return to the polls this September to elect provincial councils in the lower house of the National Assembly. We're helping Afghanistan's elected government solidify these democratic gains and deliver real change. A nation that once knew only the terror of the Taliban is now seeing a rebirth of freedom, and we will help them succeed.

Terrorists know that there is no room for them as freedom takes root in the broader Middle East, so they are fighting to stop its progress. But in recent weeks, we have dealt them a series of devastating blows. In Afghanistan, we have brought to justice dozens of terrorists and insurgents. In Pakistan, one of Usama bin Laden's senior terrorist leaders, a man named al-Libbi, was brought to justice. In Iraq, we captured two deputies of the terrorist Zarqawi, and our forces have killed or captured hundreds

of terrorists and insurgents near the Syrian border.

Our strategy is clear: We will fight the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. While some difficult days still lie ahead, these recent victories are making America safer and the world more secure.

As we make progress against today's enemies, we are also transforming our military to defeat the enemies we might face in the decades ahead. On Friday, I will speak to future leaders of our military who are graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy about how we are making our Armed Forces faster, more agile, and more lethal.

To deal with the emerging threats of the 21st century, we are building a military that can deploy rapidly and deliver more firepower with fewer forward-deployed forces. However, much of our military is still deployed in ways that reflect the threats of the cold war. So last summer, I announced a plan to reposition our forces over the next decade. This shift will bring home 60 to 70,000 uniformed personnel, while still maintaining a significant overseas presence. It will also allow us to reduce the stress on our military families and make the best overall use of our resources. In the months and years ahead, we will continue to do what is necessary to prepare our Armed Forces to protect the American people in this new century.

The war on terror continues, and we are making solid progress, but we must not become complacent. We will continue to pursue terrorists abroad. We will continue to

support democratic change throughout the world, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the broader Middle East. And we will do whatever it takes to support our men and women in uniform and give them the tools they need to prevail.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:35 a.m. on May 20 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 21. The transcript was made available by the

Office of the Press Secretary on May 20 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Abu Faraj al-Libbi, senior Al Qaida associate arrested in Pakistan on April 30; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Commencement Address at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan May 21, 2005

Thank you, President Byker, members of the Calvin faculty, distinguished guests, parents, friends, family, and most importantly, the class of 2005.

Thanks for having me. I was excited to come back to Calvin, and I was just telling Laura the other night about what fun it would be to come to Calvin College. I said, "You know, Laura, I love being around so many young folks. You know, it gives me a chance to relive my glory days in academia." [Laughter] She said, "George, that's not exactly how I would describe your college experience." [Laughter] She also said one other thing I think the graduates will appreciate hearing, a good piece of advice. She said, "The folks here are here to get their diploma, not to hear from an old guy go on too long." [Laughter] So with that sage advice, here goes.

I bring a great message of hope and freedom to Calvin College class of 2005: There is life after Professor Vanden Bosch and English 101. [Laughter] Someday you will appreciate the grammar and verbal skills you learned here. [Laughter] And if any of you wonder how far a mastery of the English language can take you, just look what it did for me. [Laughter]

I thank the moms and dads here for your sacrifice and for your love. I want to thank the faculty for your hard work and dedication. And again, I congratulate the class of 2005. Soon you will collect your degrees and say goodbyes to a school that has been your home, and you will take your rightful place in a country that offers you the greatest freedom and opportunity on Earth. I ask that you use what you've learned to make your own contributions to the story of American freedom.

The immigrants who founded Calvin College came to America for the freedom to worship, and they built this great school on the sturdy ground of liberty. They saw in the American experiment the world's best hope for freedom, and they weren't the only ones excited by what they saw. In 1835, a young civil servant and aristocrat from France named Alexis de Tocqueville would publish a book about America that still resonates today.

The book is called "Democracy in America," and in it this young Frenchman said that the secret to America's success was our talent for bringing people together for the common good. De Tocqueville wrote that tyrants maintained their power by "isolating" their citizens and that Americans

guaranteed their freedom by their remarkable ability to band together without any direction from government. The America he described offered the world something it had never seen before, a working model of a thriving democracy where opportunity was unbounded, where virtue was strong, and where citizens took responsibility for their neighbors.

Tocqueville's account is not just the observations of one man; it is the story of our founding. It is not just a description of America at a point in time; it is an agenda for our time. Our Founders rejected both a radical individualism that makes no room for others and the dreary collectivism that crushes the individual. They gave us instead a society where individual freedom is anchored in communities. And in this hopeful new century, we have a great goal, to renew this spirit of community and thereby renew the character and compassion of our country.

First, we must understand that the character of our citizens is essential to society. In a free and compassionate society, the public good depends on private character. That character is formed and shaped in institutions like family, faith, and the many civil and—social and civic organizations, from the Boy Scouts to the Rotary Clubs. The future success of our Nation depends on our ability to understand the difference between right and wrong and to have the strength of character to make the right choices. Government cannot create character, but it can and should respect and support the institutions that do.

Second, we must understand the importance of keeping power close to the people. Local people know local problems; they know the names and faces of their neighbors. The heart and soul of America is in our local communities; it is in the citizen school boards that determine how our children are educated; it's in the city councils and State legislators that reflect the unique needs and priorities of the people they serve; it's in the volunteer groups that

transform towns and cities into caring communities and neighborhoods. In the years to come, I hope that you'll consider joining these associations or serving in government, because when you come together to serve a cause greater than yourself, you will energize your communities and you will help build a more just and compassionate America.

Finally, we must understand that it is by becoming active in our communities that we move beyond our narrow interests. In today's complex world, there are a lot of things that pull us apart. We need to support and encourage the institutions and pursuits that bring us together. And we learn how to come together by participating in our churches and temples and mosques and synagogues, in civil rights associations, in our PTAs and Jaycees, in our gardening and book clubs, interest groups, and chambers of commerce, in our service groups from soup kitchens to homeless shelters.

All these organizations promote the spirit of community and help us acquire the "habits of heart" that are so vital to a free society. And because one of the deepest values of our country is compassion, we must never turn away from any citizen who feels isolated from the opportunities of America. Our faith-based and community groups provide the armies of compassion that help people who wonder if the American Dream is meant for them. These armies of compassion are the great engines of social change. They serve individual and local needs, and they have been found at the front of every great movement in American history.

The history of forming associations dedicated to serving others is as old as America, itself. From abolition societies and suffrage movements to immigrant aid groups and prison reform ministries, America's social entrepreneurs have often been far ahead of our Government in identifying and meeting the needs of our fellow countrymen. Because they are closer to the people they