

Remarks on the Vote Approving the Iraqi Constitution October 16, 2005

On behalf of the American people, I'd like to congratulate the people of Iraq for the successful completion of a vote on their draft constitution. By all indications, the turnout was greater than the turnout from the last January election, which is good news. By all indications, the Sunnis participated in greater numbers in this election than last time. And that's good news. After all, the purpose of a democracy is to make sure everybody is—participates in the process.

I'm also pleased, from the initial indications, that the level of violence was considerably less than the last election. That's a tribute to the Iraqis—forces who we've trained as well as coalition forces that worked hard to make sure that democracy could move forward in Iraq.

This is a very positive day for the Iraqis and as well for world peace. Democracies are peaceful countries. The vote today in Iraq stands in stark contrast to the attitudes and philosophy and strategy of Al Qaida

and its terrorist friends and killers. We believe and the Iraqis believe the best way forward is through the democratic process. Al Qaida wants to use their violent ways to stop the march of democracy because democracy is the exact opposite of what they believe is right.

We're making progress toward peace. We're making progress toward an ally that will join us in the war on terror, that will prevent Al Qaida from establishing safe haven in Iraq, and a country that will serve as an example for others who aspire to live in freedom.

So, again, I congratulate the Iraqi people. I thank you for meeting this milestone. Thank you for doing what is right, to set the foundation for peace for future generations to come.

Appreciate it. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:47 p.m. on the South Grounds at the White House.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Georgi Purvanov of Bulgaria and an Exchange With Reporters October 17, 2005

President Bush. We'll have opening statements, two questions a side. Welcome, Mr. President.

Mr. President, your country is a strategic ally. It's been my honor to welcome you to the Oval Office, and thank you for a wide-ranging discussion on a lot of important topics.

Bulgaria has been a valued partner in NATO. Your country has been a strong example for democracy. You understand, like I understand, that the march of democracy

will lead to world peace. I want to thank you for being a part of a vast coalition that helped liberate 50 million people. We discussed important bilateral issues.

And I want to thank you again for coming. Thank you for your leadership, and thank you for your friendship.

President Purvanov. Thank you, Mr. President. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say how pleased I am with the discussions we just had with Mr. President. I am delighted that we had a chance to

reaffirm our specific partnership and to discuss—to go through the agenda of some specific issues related.

I do appreciate the support we have been receiving from the United States in becoming a reliable NATO member state and also in joining the European Union in time—that is, as of January '07. I value the high appreciation of Bulgaria's role as a stabilizing factor in the Balkans that we receive.

I had the chance to reaffirm Bulgaria's commitment to remain an ally in the—of the antiterrorist coalition. Of course, the specifics of that are going to be discussed on an expert level. I appreciate the opportunity to raise some concrete, specific issues and put on the table Bulgaria's ambitions to get its military modernized and to be involved in some energy products in the Balkans.

And I'm sure that after these meetings and talks, our institutions and the people concerned, the experts will have a lot of work to do in order to guarantee an influx of investment. I'm particularly pleased with this very frank—open and frank discussions we had.

President Bush. Thank you. Answer a couple of questions—hold a second, please. We'll go with the American side first. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

CIA Employee's Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. Mr. President, would you expect a member of your administration to resign or take leave if they were indicted?

President Bush. Mr. President, there's an investigation going on. I've made it very clear to the press that I'm not going to discuss the investigation. And so therefore—and so my position hasn't changed since the last time I've been asked this question. There's a serious investigation. We're not going to—I'm not going to pre-judge the outcome of the investigation.

Your question. Yes.

Bulgarian Nurses in Libya

Q. Mr. President, first, we remember 9/11, and we thank you for your leadership, sir. The question is, in Bulgarian public opinion knows quite well that the most important thing for us is to get our nurses back from the jail in Libya, because they're facing a firing squad, sir, after few weeks, if the verdict is confirmed. So, we are partners. You're the leader of the most powerful nation on Earth. Why don't you help us, sir?

President Bush. Do you want to interpret that?

[*At this point, the interpreter translated the question into Bulgarian, and President Bush continued.*]

We discussed this issue at length. Like the President, my heart breaks when young children get sick. The position of the United States Government is the nurses ought to be freed. We have made our position known to the Libyan Government. There's no confusion—there should be no confusion in the Libyan Government's mind. But those nurses ought to be not only spared their life but out of prison. And we will continue to make that message perfectly clear.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Vote on Iraqi Constitution

Q. Sir, the vote on Saturday, does the Sunni vote against the Iraqi Constitution damage the political process? Will it increase the likelihood of violence and American sacrifice?

President Bush. My first reaction to the vote was that an increase in turnout was an indication that the Iraqi people are strongly in favor of settling disputes in a peaceful way, that they understand that working to find common ground on a constitution is much better for their future than relying upon killers and people who will kill innocent children and women for the sake of creating havoc.

Secondly, I was pleased to see that the Sunnis participated in the process. The idea of deciding to go into a ballot box is a positive development. The idea that people are willing to try to work out their political differences through a process, a peaceful process, is—stands in stark contrast to the Al Qaida types and the terrorists and the killers that are trying to drive the process through violence.

The way forward is clear. The political process will continue with a constitution, if finally ratified, and then an election, coupled with a security plan that continues to train Iraqis so they do the fight. The violence in this election was down from the previous election. And one of the reasons why is because the Iraqi forces took the fight to the enemy and provided security, which is really heartening to coalition forces and friends and allies.

So yesterday was a very hopeful day for peace. It's an exciting day for a country that only a few short years ago was ruled by a brutal tyrant. So I'm pleased with the progress being made.

Bulgaria's Role in the Balkans

Q. Mr. President, Bulgarian Telegraph Agency. What do you think of Bulgaria's

role—of your ally, Bulgaria, as a regional leader in the Balkans?

President Bush. I think the—I watched your election—recent parliamentary elections very closely. The people voted, and then coalitions were formed for the good of the country. That's an example that many can learn from. There's nothing more wholesome than a young democracy not only setting an example for others but taking a lead in explaining to citizens that the best way to resolve differences is through a political process that is peaceful.

And so the President and I talked about Bulgaria's important role in taking the lead in helping young democracies grow in strength. We're laying the foundation for peace. Democracies are peaceful. They're at peace with their neighbors, and the Balkans needs peace. The Middle East needs peace. And working with friends like Bulgaria, we are laying that foundation for peace.

And I'm proud to have your friendship. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Purvanov and a reporter spoke in Bulgarian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Former Texas Supreme Court Justices *October 17, 2005*

The President. I want to welcome some of my fellow Texans here in the Oval Office. We've got Republicans and Democrats, people who have been on the court, attorney generals. They're here to send a message here in Washington that the person I picked to take Sandra Day O'Connor's place is not only a person of high character and of integrity but a person who can get the job done.

Harriet Miers is a uniquely qualified person to serve on the bench. She is a smart—she is capable. She is a pioneer. She's been consistently ranked as one of the top 50 women lawyers in the United States. She has been a leader in the legal profession. She's impressed these folks. They know her well. They know that she'll bring excellence to the bench.

So I want to thank you all for coming. Thank you for being part of a group of