

The President. We're constantly gathering intelligence. We're monitoring influence. We are adjusting our tactics. We are—obviously, if there's any kind of influence from a foreign country that is disruptive, any kind of influence—if the Iranians are trying to influence the outcome of the political process or the outcome of the security situation there, we're letting them know our displeasure.

Our call is for those in the neighborhood to allow Iran—Iraq to develop a democracy. And that includes our call to Iran as well as to Syria. We have made our concerns known, and we will continue to make our concerns known. It's in the interests of the neighborhood that Iraq develop to be a peaceful democracy. It's important for countries to have stable, peaceful, prosperous countries on their border. Prosperity in one nation will help prosperity in other nations. It's important for our friends in the rest of the Middle East to help this new democracy.

And so, yes, we're interested in negative influence; we're also interested in positive influence. And we call on people to be a positive influence, to help this new democracy emerge. And I'm optimistic that the Iraqi people will overcome the challenges they face.

And my optimism is based upon reality on the ground. One, there were some people trying to, obviously, foment sectarian

violence. Some have called it a civil war. But it didn't work. Secondly, I'm optimistic because the Iraqi security forces performed, in most cases, really well to provide security. All but two of the Provinces of Iraq, after the blowing up of the mosque, were settled. I'm positive and optimistic about the development that the Iraqi security forces are achieving.

I know we've got to do more work in the police forces; we have said that very clearly. General Casey has called the year 2006 “the year of police training,” and we'll continue to work to train the police. I'm optimistic that the leadership recognizes that a sectarian violence will undermine the capacity for them to self govern. I believe we'll have a unity government in place that will help move the process forward. I fully recognize that the nature of the enemy is such that they want to convince the world that we cannot succeed in Iraq. I know we're going to succeed if we don't lose our will.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:46 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Montgomery Meigs, USA (Ret.), director, Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization; and Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

The President's Radio Address *March 11, 2006*

Good morning. This month will mark the 3-year anniversary of the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, which liberated Iraq from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. As this milestone approaches, I will be giving a series of speeches to update the American people on our strategy for victory in Iraq. I will discuss the progress we are making,

the lessons we've learned from our experiences, and how we're fixing what has not worked.

On Monday I will give the first of these speeches, focusing on the security element of our strategy, the task of defeating the terrorists and training Iraqi security forces

so they can take the lead in the fight and defend their own democracy.

The Iraqi security forces have made great strides in the past year, and they performed well after the recent bombing of the Golden Mosque of Samarra. This mosque is one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites, and after it was bombed, bands of armed militia began exacting revenge with reprisal attacks on Sunni mosques and random violence that took the lives of hundreds of innocent Iraqis.

Immediately after the attack, Iraq's leaders came together and acted to restore calm and end the violence. They deployed Iraqi security forces to Baghdad and other areas threatened by violence. These forces moved rapidly and effectively to protect religious sites, enforce a curfew, and reestablish civil order where necessary. We commend them for their good work.

The situation in Iraq is still tense. Reports of kidnappings and executions are being taken very seriously. The Iraqi Government has made clear that such violent attacks cannot be tolerated. The vast majority of Iraqis have shown they want a future of freedom and peace.

By their response over the past 2 weeks and their participation in three successful elections last year, the Iraqi people have made clear they will not let a violent minority take that future away by tearing the country apart. And the Iraqi security forces have shown that they are capable of rising above sectarian divisions to protect the unity of a free Iraq.

The effective performance of the Iraqi security forces during this crisis showed that our hard work to build up and train these forces is paying off. In the coming months, we will help prepare more Iraqi battalions to take the lead in battle, and Iraqi forces will assume responsibility over more territory. Our goal is to have the Iraqis control more territory than the coalition forces by the end of this year. And as Iraqis assume responsibility over more territory, this frees American and coalition

forces to concentrate on hunting down high-value targets like the terrorist Zarqawi and his associates.

As we take the fight to the terrorists, they realize they cannot defeat us directly in battle, so they have resorted to brutal attacks against innocent Iraqis and American forces using improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. IEDs are homemade bombs that can be hidden in cars or by the side of a road and detonated remotely, using everyday devices like garage door openers and cordless phones.

These weapons are now the principal threat to our troops and to the future of a free Iraq. And to defeat this threat, my administration has established a new, high-level command at the Department of Defense, led by retired four-star General Montgomery Meigs. This weekend General Meigs is briefing me at the White House on our plan to defeat the threat of IEDs. We're harnessing every available resource, the ingenuity of our best scientists and engineers, and the determination of our military to defeat this threat. And we're not going to rest until this danger to our troops has been removed.

In the coming days, there will be considerable reflection on the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and our remaining mission in Iraq. The last 3 years have tested our resolve. The fighting has been tough. The enemy we face has proved to be brutal and relentless. We have changed our approach in many areas to reflect the hard realities on the ground. And the sacrifice being made by our young men and women who wear the uniform has been heartening and inspiring.

Amid the daily news of car bombs and kidnappings and brutal killings, I can understand why many of our fellow citizens are now wondering if the entire mission was worth it. I strongly believe our country is better off with Saddam Hussein out of power. Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq was an enemy of America who shot at our airplanes, had a history of pursuing and using

weapons of mass destruction, threatened and invaded his neighbors, ordered the death of thousands of his citizens, and supported terrorism.

After the liberation of the Iraqi people, Al Qaida and their affiliates have made Iraq the central front on the war on terror. By helping the Iraqi people build a free and representative government, we will deny the terrorists a safe haven to plan attacks against America. The security of our country is directly linked to the liberty of the Iraqi people. This will require more difficult days of fighting and sacrifice, yet I am confident that our strategy will result in victory, and then our troops can come home with the honor they have earned.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 a.m. on March 10 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 11. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 10 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Gen. Montgomery Meigs, USA (Ret.), director, Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda of Slovakia

March 13, 2006

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. Thank you for coming. I always enjoy being with you because you're an optimistic, upbeat believer in the people of your country and the possibilities to work together to achieve peace. And so thanks for coming.

I admire the job you have done, and I admire the record that you have produced. A lot of times in politics, people are pretty good talkers, but they don't follow through. You have followed through.

We discussed a lot of issues. I thank the Prime Minister for his contributions to helping young democracies succeed, democracies in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I want to thank you for that.

We discussed the importance for transatlantic ties between the United States and not only Slovakia but also between the United States and Europe. And I assured him that those transatlantic ties are an important part of our policies here.

We talked about two issues that I found—that I know are important. One, of course, is the visa issue. The Prime Minister made it very clear that he expects there to be some progress on the visa issue, that he's—he represents the good people of Slovakia when he says to me that there needs to be a constant renewal of the process to make sure that it is fair. And I appreciate—I listened very carefully to my friend and can assure the people of Slovakia that we are working together to make the visa policy work better.

Secondly, he talked about the knowledge-based economy that he envisioned for his country. And I thought, first of all, it's very wise to—he recognizes the world and the challenges of the world and knows full well that as people gain knowledge, a country is going to end up being more competitive in the 21st century.

And so I—we strategized about ways to help Slovakia and the United States benefit