

the tyrant. They were the ones whose families got gassed by his chemical weapons. They were the ones who, if they spoke out, were harassed by a police state. It must be a magnificent feeling to be liberated from the clutches of a tyrant.

Secondly, much of life is normal in Iraq. And you talk to people who go there, and they come back and tell you that change is significant and palpable. People can see the difference; there's vibrancy. What we see, of course, is isolated incidents of terror. And as I mentioned earlier to you, it hurts—it hits our conscience. America is a wonderful country because we're a country of conscience. It bothers us to see not only our own troops die but it bothers us to see an Iraqi kid killed. That's the nature of our society; we don't treat life in a cavalier way. We believe in America—and it's one of the really beautiful things about America—that every life is precious. That's what we believe. And so I'm not surprised that there is a different attitude inside the country than our own.

Ultimately, here in America, success on the ground in Iraq—and I've defined what victory means before—will buoy the spirits of our people. And in the meantime, I've got to go to places like Louisville, Kentucky, and sit down and spend time giving it my best shot to describe to you my decisionmaking process, the philosophy behind which this Government is operating, and my optimism about our capacity to achieve our objective.

And my deep belief, my firm and deep belief is that the sacrifices being made today will inure to the benefit of our chil-

dren and grandchildren. On the one hand, we have got to protect America, and we're working hard to do so. Every day you've got good citizens in your country making sacrifices to either find an enemy that's hiding somewhere or picking up information that we can use to protect us. In the long run, we have got to have faith in a great system of government that, over the ages, has proven to be the foundation for peace.

Listen, I want to thank you all for giving me a chance to come by. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. in the Kentucky International Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Joe Reagan, president and chief executive officer, Greater Louisville, Inc.; Gov. Ernie Fletcher and Lt. Gov. Stephen B. Pence of Kentucky; Mayor Jerry E. Abramson of Louisville, KY; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and senior Al Qaida associate; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Abu Zubaydah, senior Al Qaida associate, who was captured in Pakistan on March 28, 2002; Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1, 2003; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and President Vicente Fox Quesada of Mexico.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting of Small-Business Owners and Community Leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana *January 12, 2006*

Mr. Mayor, thank you. It's good to be back in your city. I appreciate the Lieuten-

ant Governor and Members of the United States Congress for being here as well. I

particularly want to thank the small-business owners of New Orleans. I'm looking forward to hearing what you have to say about your traditions and your hopes and your frustrations. We all share the same goal, and that's to have this great city rise again, to be a shining part of the South.

It was in the past, and I think this can be a better city, and to this end, I've done a couple of things. One, I appointed my friend Don Powell to be down here to help implement the strategy developed by the mayor and the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. In other words, I believe the best strategy for the rebuilding of New Orleans and the revitalization of the parishes around New Orleans is for the local folks to design the strategy and to have the Federal Government become a partner.

And I want to thank you for putting a committee together; I know you did as well, Mitch. Powell's job is to come down and help interface and interact. I've told the people down here that the Federal Government has got a major role to play. So far we've appropriated or made available \$85 billion in reconstruction and relief along the gulf coast. About 25 billion of that has been spent; there's \$60 billion in the pipeline, thanks to the good work of the Members of the Congress and the United States Senate.

One issue I do want to touch on is the levees. Now, the mayor made it very clear to me that we need a Federal policy, a strong Federal policy on the levees in order to encourage investors and investment in New Orleans. In other words, if there's any doubt about levees, people wouldn't be willing to reinvest in this city. If we couldn't get people to reinvest in this city, the recovery wouldn't be as strong as we hope it to be.

Working with the Corps of Engineers, we've put forth a plan that said that the levee system will be stronger and better than the previous levee system. And we put a request in for \$3.1 billion, plus money to study how possibly to make this

system even better. Unfortunately, at the very last minute in the appropriations process, some Members of Congress moved 1.4 billion of that 3.1 billion to projects not directly related to New Orleans and the surrounding area. And so, in order to make sure that this city gets the money necessary to make sure that the levees are stronger and better, Congress needs to restore that 1.4 billion directly into projects for New Orleans and the surrounding parishes. I'm looking forward to working with the Members of the Congress to make sure that that money is restored.

Secondly, I understand that one of the keys to success is going to be private-sector initiatives. That's why we've got the small-business owners here and the man responsible for making sure New Orleans is well represented to the rest of the country, and that is Stephen, who is a part of the Chamber. One way to make sure that the private sector leads the recovery for New Orleans is to make sure the tax laws encourage investment. And I want to thank the Members of Congress for passing the GO Zone legislation which encourages investment. And that will be helpful for the folks here.

And finally, I know housing is a particularly difficult issue, an important issue. You can't have a revitalized New Orleans unless people have a place to live. And we want to—we look forward to working with the mayor and the State on implementing the vision, but want to remind people that in the new appropriations bill I signed is \$11.5 billion of CDBG money. In Mississippi, the Governor intends to use that money on uninsured housing—to pay for the uninsured folks who didn't have flood insurance. And the law is written so that the State, in working in conjunction with the local authorities, can spend that money in a way to help the recovery.

We're aware of the issues here. I'm looking forward to hearing more from you all about how we can continue to work together. I will tell you, the contrast between when I was last here and today, Stephen,

is pretty dramatic. It may be hard for you to see, but from when I first came here to today, New Orleans is reminding me of the city I used to come to visit. It's a heck of a place to bring your family. It's a great place to find some of the greatest food in the world and some wonderful fun. And I'm glad you got your infrastructure back on its feet. I know you're beginning to welcome citizens from all around the country here to New Orleans. And for folks around the country who are looking for a great place to have a convention or a great place to visit, I'd suggest coming here to the great New Orleans.

Anyway, thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. in the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention Center and Visitors Bureau, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and Lt. Gov. Mitchell J. Landrieu of Louisiana; Donald E. Powell, Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, in his capacity as coordinator of Federal gulf coast relief efforts; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Stephen J. Perry, president and chief executive officer, New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc.; and Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi.

Remarks on Gulf Coast Reconstruction in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi *January 12, 2006*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Haley said that it's protocol not to introduce the President. Well, that shows what he knows about protocol. *[Laughter]* He just introduced me. *[Laughter]* Thanks for having me back. My first observation is, it's good to see—to be able to look in people's eyes and not see them all bloodshot. *[Laughter]*

I can remember coming here, the times I came and looked hard in people's eyes and saw a sense of desperation and worry and deep, deep concern about the future. I'm sure there is still concern about the future, but the eyes have cleared up. There's a sense of optimism. There's a hope. There's a little bounce in people's step. I'm not surprised; the people down here have showed incredible courage. And I want to thank you for showing the rest of our country what it means to survive an incredible hardship with high spirits.

Your Governor has done a magnificent job. He went up to Washington—*[ap- pause]*. You know, it's nice of him to give me the credit to sign the bill. It's nice of him to compliment Congressman Taylor,

who deserves to be complimented, and compliment—and Congressman Chip Pickering, both of whom are here, and I thank them for coming. It's wise of him to compliment Senator Lott and Senator Cochran. *[Laughter]* And he's right to compliment them. But the truth of the matter is, the person who deserve the biggest compliment, in my judgment, is the man who brought the will of the Mississippi people, the needs of the Mississippi people up to Washington, DC, and fashioned one heck of a piece of legislation for the people of this important State. Thank you, Governor, for your hard work.

And I want to thank Marsha for being here as well. I don't know how you put up with him for all these years. *[Laughter]* You must be a patient soul. But he married well, just like me. And speaking about that, Laura sends her best wishes to all of you all. She's looking forward to coming back down here. She's not going to believe the difference between the last time she was here and today.