

I hope you enjoy your evening tonight. Thanks for letting me come by. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:43 p.m. at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to A. Kenneth Ciongoli, chairman, and Ken Aspromonte, member of the board

of directors, National Italian American Foundation; Italy's Ambassador to the U.S. Giovanni Castellaneta; entertainer Frankie Valli; former U.S. Ambassador to Italy Peter F. Secchia; and baseball Hall of Famers Tommy Lasorda and Yogi Berra. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## The President's Radio Address *October 21, 2006*

Good morning. Earlier this week, I spoke with Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq. We discussed the recent increase in violence in his country. Attacks have grown significantly during the first weeks of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

There are a number of reasons for this increase in violence. One reason is that coalition and Iraqi forces have been conducting focused operations to bring security to Baghdad. Side by side, Iraqi and American forces are operating in the city's most violent areas to disrupt Al Qaida, capture enemy fighters, crack down on IED makers, and break up death squads. As we engage our enemies in their stronghold, these enemies are putting up a tough fight. In a briefing in Iraq on Thursday, General William Caldwell said the operation to secure Baghdad has "not met our overall expectations." He also explained, "It's no coincidence that the surge in attacks against coalition forces coincides with our increased presence in the streets in Baghdad."

Our goal in Iraq is clear and unchanging: Our goal is victory. What is changing are the tactics we use to achieve that goal. Our commanders on the ground are constantly adjusting their approach to stay ahead of the enemy, particularly in Baghdad. General Pete Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, recently put it this way: "From a military standpoint, every day is a reassessment day." We have a strategy that allows

us to be flexible and to adapt to changing circumstances. We've changed the way we train the Iraqi security forces. We have changed the way we deliver reconstruction assistance in areas that have been cleared of terrorist influence. And we will continue to be flexible and make every necessary change to prevail in this struggle.

Iraq's new leaders are beginning to take the difficult steps necessary to defeat the terrorists and unite their country. The Prime Minister recently met with tribal leaders from Anbar Province, who told him they are ready to stand up and fight the terrorists. He's also taken action to clean up the Iraqi National Police. His government suspended a National Police unit after allegations that some of its members were linked to militias and death squads. A battalion commander was arrested for possible complicity in sectarian deaths. And earlier this week, two of Iraq's most senior police commanders were reassigned as part of a major restructuring of the national police force.

Another reason for the recent increase in attacks is that the terrorists are trying to influence public opinion here in the United States. They have a sophisticated propaganda strategy. They know they cannot defeat us in the battle, so they conduct high-profile attacks, hoping that the images of violence will demoralize our country and

force us to retreat. They carry video cameras and film their atrocities and broadcast them on the Internet. They e-mail images and video clips to Middle Eastern cable networks like Al Jazeera and instruct their followers to send the same material to American journalists, authors, and opinion leaders. They operate web sites where they post messages for their followers and readers across the world.

In one recent message, the Global Islamic Media Front, a group that often posts Al Qaida propaganda on web sites, said their goal is to “carry out a media war that is parallel to the military war.” This is the same strategy the terrorists launched in Afghanistan following 9/11. In a letter to the Taliban leader Mullah Omar, Usama bin Laden wrote that Al Qaida intended to wage “a media campaign to create a wedge between the American people and their Government.”

The terrorists are trying to divide America and break our will, and we must not allow them to succeed. So America will stand with the democratic Government of Iraq. We will help Prime Minister Maliki build a free nation that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself. And we will help Iraq become a strong democracy that is a strong ally in the war on terror.

There is one thing we will not do: We will not pull our troops off the battlefield before the mission is complete. There are some in Washington who argue that retreating from Iraq would make us safer. I disagree. Retreating from Iraq would

allow the terrorists to gain a new safe haven from which to launch new attacks on America. Retreating from Iraq would dishonor the men and women who have given their lives in that country and mean their sacrifice has been in vain. And retreating from Iraq would embolden the terrorists and make our country, our friends, and our allies more vulnerable to new attacks.

The last few weeks have been rough for our troops in Iraq and for the Iraqi people. The fighting is difficult, but our Nation has seen difficult fights before. In World War II and the cold war, earlier generations of Americans sacrificed so that we can live in freedom. This generation will do its duty as well. We will defeat the terrorists everywhere they make their stand, and we will leave a more hopeful world for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:30 p.m. on October 20 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 20 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, USA, spokesman, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Message on the Observance of Eid al-Fitr *October 20, 2006*

I send greetings to Muslims in the United States and around the world celebrating Eid al-Fitr.

Islam is a great faith that has transcended racial and ethnic divisions and

brought hope and comfort to many people. Throughout Ramadan, Muslims have fasted to focus their minds on faith and to direct their hearts to charity. Eid al-Fitr marks the completion of this holy month with the