

those who are suffering. The United States is committed to achieving stability, lasting

peace, and the restoration of basic human rights for the people of Darfur.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Senior State Department Officials *December 11, 2006*

Thank you all for coming. I just had a briefing with my senior policy advisers here at the State Department. I want to thank you for your hospitality, Madam Secretary.

We talked about a lot of things. We talked about what's taking place on the ground in Iraq, particularly from the perspective of the State Department. I must tell you, there are some fantastic, brave souls who are heading PRTs, Provincial Reconstruction Teams. These are our civilian components on the ground there in Iraq. And we got a briefing from Baghdad, with one of our PRT leaders here in Washington, about the challenges and the tasks to help this Iraqi Government get a country that can sustain and govern and defend itself.

No question in my mind, there are some very brave State Department officials who are engaged in this really important endeavor, and I want to thank them and their families. I appreciate the advice I got from those folks in the field. And that advice is an important part and an important component of putting together a new way forward in Iraq. Like most Americans, this administration wants to succeed in Iraq, because we understand success in Iraq will help protect the United States in the long run.

We also talked about the neighborhood, the countries that surround Iraq and the responsibilities that they have to help this young Iraqi democracy survive. We believe that most of the countries understand that a mainstream society, a society that is a functioning democracy, is in their interests. And it's up to us to help focus their atten-

tions and focus their efforts on helping the Iraqis succeed.

I appreciate so very much the Iraqi leadership taking the lead in its neighborhood. After all, one of the things we're trying to do is help this Government get on its feet so it can govern and it can conduct its own foreign policy. But the role of America is to help this young democracy survive.

I'm looking forward to continuing my deliberations with the military. There's no question, we've got to make sure that the State Department and the Defense Department are—the efforts and their recommendations are closely coordinated so that when I do speak to the American people, they will know that I've listened to all aspects of Government and that the way forward is the way forward to achieve our objective: to succeed in Iraq. And success is a country that governs, defends itself, that is a free society, that serves as an ally in this war on terror.

And the reason why that's vital is because Iraq is a central component of defeating the extremists who want to establish safe haven in the Middle East, extremists who would use their safe haven from which to attack the United States, extremists and radicals who have stated that they want to topple moderate governments in order to be able to achieve assets necessary to effect their dream of spreading their totalitarian ideology as far and wide as possible.

This is really the calling of our time, that is, to defeat these extremists and radicals. And Iraq is a component part, an important part of laying the foundation for peace.

And so, Madam Secretary, thank you for the briefing. I want to thank your team here in Washington for their good work, and I thank those out in the field who have shown such incredible bravery to do

the hard work necessary to secure our country.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the State Department.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi of Iraq

December 12, 2006

President Bush. It's been my honor to meet with the Vice President of Iraq again. I had the pleasure of meeting the Vice President in Baghdad. It was there that I invited him to come to Washington, DC, and I did so because I understand his importance to the future of Iraq.

The Vice President has suffered unspeakable violence in his family. He's lost loved ones to violent action. And yet, in spite of his grief and in spite of pain in his heart, he was willing to work for a united Iraq and a peaceful Iraq, an Iraq that can govern itself and sustain itself and defend itself, a free Iraq that will be an ally in the war against extremists and radicals.

And, Mr. Vice President, I respect your courage, and I respect your advice.

I spent time with the Vice President today talking about the conditions in Iraq and what the United States can do to help this Iraqi Government succeed. He brought me up to date on the terrible violence that is taking place in some of the neighborhoods in Baghdad. He spoke eloquently about the suffering that innocent families have gone through. And my heart goes out to those, Mr. Vice President, who have suffered at the hands of extremists and killers.

Our objective is to help the Iraqi Government deal with the extremists and killers and support the vast majority of Iraqis who are reasonable people who want peace.

And so, Mr. Vice President, my message to you today, and to the Iraqi people is,

we want to help you. We want to help your Government be effective. We want your help—your Government live up to its words and ideals. And I thank you for being a leader of one aspect of Iraqi society—you're the leader of many Sunnis, and you're committed to a government that is Shi'a, Sunni, Kurdish, and everybody else in your country, every other group in your country that will help us yield peace.

And I welcome you; I thank you; and I praise your courage.

Vice President Hashimi. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. President for the invitation, first of all, and too when he expedites my visit to the States, which left a really positive message to the Iraqi people that the American administration, while they are revising their strategy, they are looking for a balance and fair analysis from diversified leaders in Iraq.

So this visit coming after the visit of Mr. Hakim, I would like also to express my appreciation to the unique and unforgettable commitment of the President when he said, and continued saying, that we are committed to the success in Iraq. And I share his views and aspirations that there is no way but success in Iraq.

We have no other option in Iraq but to achieve that success. And with the cooperation with our friends and Mr. President and the American administration, we will join forces to achieve that success in the foreseeable future.