

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.

There is a chance, and I can assure you there is a great and real chance to get out of this present dilemma. It is a hard time that the Iraqis face in time being, but there is a light in the corridor. There is a chance, but we need a good will and a strong determination, the same strong determination that the Mr. President has. There will be a chance for the country and for Iraq to succeed.

During my discussion and dialog with the Mr. President, I had really a frank and positive dialog and conversation. We tackled key issues. And hopefully, at the end of the day, I would like to see my comments and observations welcomed, because at the end of the day, what I say to Mr. President is achieving—or could be seen as a genuine and—[inaudible]—part in the way of achieving the success.

I thank Mr. President again for the time given to myself and to my colleagues. And I leave United States with a great hope that we do have friends in Washington; that they are very much interested, in fact, to help us in these very difficult times, and to achieve the unforgettable, the long-awaited success. Whatever the sacrifices, my family and the country, at the end of the day, we have no other option but to maintain this momentum and to struggle until we meet that success, *inshallah*.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Vice President Hashimi referred to Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, chairman, Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Senior Department of Defense Officials and an Exchange With Reporters in Arlington, Virginia December 13, 2006

The President. I've just concluded a very productive meeting with the Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Pete Pace, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Vice President. I thank these men who wear our uniform for a very candid and fruitful discussion about the—about how to secure this country and how to win a war that we now find ourselves in.

We spent a lot of time talking about a new way forward in Iraq, to help the Iraqi Government confront and defeat the enemies of a free Iraq. We all agree it's in our Nation's interest that we help this Government succeed. We recognize that there are enemies that would like to topple this young democracy so they could have safe haven from which to plot and plan attacks against moderate nations in the Middle East, as well as attacks against the United

States. It's in our interest that we help this Government succeed.

There have been a lot of violence in Iraq, and the violence has been horrific. Scores of innocent men, women, and children are being brutally killed by ruthless murderers. Our troops are engaged in offensive operations, and we mourn the loss of life. We are saddened by the loss of every single life amongst our service men and women. Our folks are very active in Al Anbar and in Baghdad, which is where the enemy is concentrated.

Our commanders report that the enemy has also suffered. Offensive operations by Iraqi and coalition forces against terrorists and insurgents and death squad leaders have yielded positive results. In the months of October, November, and the first week of December, we have killed or captured nearly 5,900 of the enemy.