

Remarks at a Groundbreaking Ceremony for the United States Institute of Peace

June 5, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your kind introduction. And thank you for inviting me to join you to break ground for the United States Institute of Peace's new home. I'm really pleased to be here. I appreciate what you do to resolve conflict and support new democracies and to build peace by promoting effective diplomacy. And speaking about effective diplomacy, it seems like you used some to get this special piece of land. I congratulate you on picking a wonderful site.

I thank Robin West, the Chairman; Dick Solomon, the President. Members of the Board of Directors, thank you for being here. I'm so pleased to be with the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and some of her predecessors. Thank you for being here. I appreciate Admiral Mullen joining us. I want to thank members of my administration for coming. Madam Speaker, you grace us with your presence. Thank you for coming. I also want to pay homage to Ted Stevens for helping to secure the funding for this important site, as well as Members of the United States Senate who have joined him here and Members of the House. I appreciate Reverend Lovett, Father Hesburgh, members of the diplomatic corps, ladies and gentlemen.

The Institute of Peace was founded in 1984. It was during the last great ideological struggle of the 20th century. This was the struggle against Soviet communism, a struggle that was eventually won by freedom because of peace through strength and because of the help of the Institute of Peace.

We're in a different struggle today, but we're in an ideological struggle against violent extremism. The U.S. Institute of Peace is playing an important role, and I thank

you for that. In Afghanistan, you're helping a young democracy establish the rule of law and strengthen public education and build a civil society. In Iraq, you're helping the nation overcome the legacy of decades of tyranny by strengthening government institutions and promoting peaceful engagement. And although the struggle against violent extremism is in its early years, there's no doubt in my mind, freedom will again prevail, and your help is going to be important.

In this struggle, we're guided by a clear principle: Freedom is universal. We believe that freedom is the birthright of every man, woman, and child. Free societies are peaceful societies. Freedom helps supplant the conditions of hopelessness that extremists exploit to recruit terrorists and suicide bombers. People who live in liberty are less likely to turn to ideologies of hatred and fear. And that is why the United States is leading and must continue to lead the cause of freedom for the sake of peace.

September the 11th, we saw how the lack of freedom in other lands can bring death and destruction to our own land. Our most solemn obligation is to protect the American people. That is why we're pursuing and bringing to justice terrorists. We're fighting them overseas so we don't have to face them here in the United States of America.

But the effort requires more. It requires using the power of liberty to marginalize extremists. And the best way to do so is to use our national resources to strengthen the institutions of freedom. That's what I want to talk to you about today, briefly, you'll be pleased to hear.

Institutions, of course, include a democratic system of government, a vibrant free

press, independent judiciary, a free enterprise system, places of worship where people are free to practice their faith. These institutions include an education system that provides citizens a link to the world, health infrastructure that combats plagues like HIV/AIDS and malaria, and women's organizations that help societies take advantage of the skills and talents of half their population.

We're helping nations across the world build these institutions, and we face three challenges as we do so. First of all, there are developing nations, many on the continent of Africa, that are facing extreme poverty and health epidemics and humanitarian catastrophes and are therefore vulnerable to extremists who take advantage of chaos and instability.

Secondly, there are nations like Colombia and Lebanon and Pakistan that are facing transnational threats from drug cartels or terrorist networks that seek safe haven on their territory and threaten to overwhelm their institutions.

And thirdly, there are nations like Afghanistan and Iraq, where we removed dangerous regimes that threatened our people and now have a special obligation to help them build free societies that their—that become allies in the fight against these extremists.

It's in America's vital interest to help all these nations combat ideologies of hate. It's in our security interest to eliminate safe havens for terrorists and extremists. It's in our national interest to develop institutions that allow them to govern their territories effectively and improve their lives.

We've been making transformations over the last 8 years to make these capabilities more real and more effective. We're transforming the United States military so we can deliver justice to the terrorists in a more effective way. We're transforming America's capabilities to help poor and struggling societies become healthy and prosperous.

And we've seen those effective transformations through the Emergency Plan for AIDS or malaria initiative or the Millennium Challenge Account. The Millennium Challenge Account represents a different approach to development. It rewards nations that govern responsibly and fight corruption and invest in the health and education of their people and use the power of free markets and free trade to lift the people out of poverty.

One thing in common for all these programs is, we insist upon results, and we measure. And the results are coming in, and millions of people are benefiting from this foreign policy initiative. And they deserve to be fully supported by the United States Congress.

We're also transforming America's capabilities to helping emergency—emerging democracies build free institutions while under fire from terrorists and under pressure from state sponsors of terror. And this is a new challenge that we face at the start of the 21st century. And as we've adopted to meet these new circumstances, there have been successes and setbacks, and we've learned some lessons.

One lesson is that before nations under fire from terrorists can make political and economic progress, their populations need basic security. Sometimes local security institutions, with training and equipment and support from the outside, can handle the task. Take, for example, Colombia. Colombia and America launched an ambitious program that helped rescue that country from the brink of becoming a failed state. Plan Colombia, which started under my predecessor, made it clear that the United States would help the Colombian Government modernize its military and fight the FARC terrorists, expand education opportunity, provide Colombians with alternatives to a life of terror and narcotrafficking. Congress has an opportunity to strengthen these efforts, and I strongly urge them to send a clear and sound message to the people of Colombia and the region that we

stand with them by passing the Colombia free trade agreement.

In other situations, America is training international peacekeepers so they can deploy to provide security in troubled regions. We've started what's called the Global Peace Operations Initiative. The whole idea is to work to train international peacekeeping forces so they can do the work necessary to provide stability and security, so institutions can advance. So far, we've trained more than 40,000 peacekeepers, and the plan is to train 75,000 additional.

These instances where America has removed regimes that threaten us, American troops may need to play a direct role in providing security. In Iraq, 2006, the country was descending into sectarian chaos. So we launched the surge, 30,000 additional troops to work with Iraqi forces to protect the Iraqi people from terrorists, insurgents, and illegal militias. Today, because we acted, violence in Iraq is down to its lowest point since late March of 2004. Civilian deaths are down. Sectarian killings are down. Security has improved, as well as the economy. Political reconciliation is taking place at the grassroots and Federal level. And as the Iraqi security forces are becoming more capable, our troops are beginning to come home under a policy of return on success.

A lesson we've learned is that civilian expertise is vital to strengthening the institutions of freedom. In Iraq and Afghanistan, we've developed an important tool to tap into civilian expertise called Provincial Reconstruction Teams. PRTs bring together civilian, diplomatic, and military personnel. They move into communities that our military has cleared of terrorists. They help ensure that security gains are followed with real improvements in daily life by helping local leaders create jobs and deliver basic services and build up local economies.

PRTs are uniquely suited to situations like Afghanistan and Iraq. In the future, civilian expertise will be needed in other countries where we do not have ongoing

military operations. At the moment, we lack the capability to rapidly deploy civilian experts with the right skills to trouble spots around the world. We launched what's called a Civilian Stabilization Initiative, which is being run out of the State Department in the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization.

One element of the new office is an Active Response Corps, made up of civilian experts from many Government agencies who deploy full time to at-risk countries. This corps will eventually include 250 personnel from the Departments of State and Justice, Agriculture, Commerce, AID, and other civilian agencies with relevant expertise.

Another element is the Standby Reserve [Response]* Corps, which is a reserve force of current and former Government employees who volunteer to be an on-call supplemental force that can deploy for reconstruction and stabilization missions on short notice.

And finally, this initiative will include a new Civilian Reserve Corps that will function much like our military reserve. It will be made up of American citizens with critical skills, such as police officers and judges and prosecutors and engineers and doctors and public administrators. The corps will give people across America who do not wear the uniform a chance to serve in the defining struggle of our time.

Legislation authorizing the Civilian Reserve Corps has passed the House of Representatives. It's awaiting action in the Senate. And I strongly urge Congress to pass this bipartisan legislation as soon as possible.

Another lesson is, is that in aiding the rise of strong and stable democracies requires that—the efforts of much more than Washington, DC. It requires the efforts of other governments and nonorganizational—nongovernmental organizations and people around the world.

* White House correction.

The work of democratic development is the work of all free nations. This is precisely the message that Secretary Rice and I have been carrying around the world. We're rallying other nations to train peacekeepers to support Afghanistan and Iraq and to act boldly to alleviate hunger and poverty.

I'm going to the G-8 in Japan in the month of July. The last G-8, our partners stood up and made strong commitments to help Africa deal with malaria and HIV/AIDS. They have yet to make good on their commitments. And I will remind them, it's one thing to make a promise; it's another thing to write the check. And the American Government expects our partners to live up to their obligations.

The work of democratic development sometimes requires young democracies under siege to band together with partnerships to deal with common threats. And this is the approach we're taking in Central America. We've encouraged nations threatened by narcotraffickers to cooperate in protecting their people. The supplemental that's being debated in the Congress will help further this effort by linking Mexico and Central America with U.S. to have a joint strategy: protecting our hemisphere from narcotraffickers and the terrorists that they ultimately yield. I asked Congress to approve the request quickly in the supplemental without putting unreasonable conditions on the vital aid.

One thing is for certain: that if we expect democracies to prevail, to marginalize the extremists, countries—it requires countries to have good, strong democratic leaders. And the best way to encourage that is to have them come to our colleges and universities. We've made good progress about changing the student visa regime after 9/11. We've increased the number of students coming here. And it's in our interest that we continue to increase the number of students coming to study in the United States.

And finally, the work of democratic development is the work of nongovernmental organizations, like the U.S. Institute of Peace. Obviously, these organizations can go into countries where it's harder for governments to operate. So it's very important for this Government and future Governments to always be a strong and steady partner to nongovernmental organizations and groups like the U.S. Institute of Peace.

The work of democratic development is the great cause of our time, and we shouldn't shy away from it. And we must be confident in our ability to help others realize the blessings of freedom. My big concern is that the United States becomes isolationist and nervous; we don't support those values that have stood the test of time. The Institute of Peace, I hope, will make sure that never happens.

Our fellow citizens can help in many ways. They can join an organization like this one. They can join the civilian reserve. They can become—like thousands of other compassionate citizens—become soldiers in the armies of compassion by helping HIV/AIDS victims or help educate people around the world. Or they can make the noble choice that has sustained freedom for generations and join the United States military. However they choose to serve, advancing the cause of liberty is necessary to advance the cause of peace.

I'm honored to be with you today. Looking forward to coming back someday to see this building when it's built. Thanks for your efforts. Thanks for your mission. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:49 a.m. at Navy Hill. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of State George P. Shultz, who introduced the President, and Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, cochairs, Building for Peace Campaign, U.S. Institute of Peace; J. Robinson West, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Richard H. Solomon, President, and Rev. Sidney Lovett (Ret.), former member of the Board of Directors, U.S. Institute

of Peace; and Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Office of the Press Secretary also released

a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands

June 5, 2008

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thanks for coming back. I enjoyed being with you. You represent a great country. You're a good friend of the United States of America, and I appreciate our candid discussion of a variety of issues.

First, I want to thank you and your folks for helping the people of Afghanistan realize the blessings of liberty. There is a—we're engaged in a struggle against ideologues who use murder to achieve their political objectives. One way to help—and defeat those folks and marginalize them is to help others realize the blessings of a free society. And I appreciate your courage, and I appreciate the troops, and—but the people of Afghanistan appreciate them more.

We had a good discussion on a variety of issues. We talked about the need for—to continue our close cooperation on a series of issues. I appreciate very much your concern about the people on the continent of Africa, your concern about people needlessly dying because of HIV/AIDS. I share those same concerns with you.

Talked about completing the WTO round, the Doha round. The Prime Minister and I both agree, a world that trades freely is a world that is a more hopeful world and, certainly, a way to help people grow out of poverty.

And we talked about the climate issue. I assured him that the United States is concerned about the issue. We're concerned about being dependent on oil. And the two happen to go hand in hand. And we've developed a strategy to encourage

the advent of new technologies that will change our habits; at the same time, allow us to empower our economy in a way that will help us be good stewards in the environment. I want to thank you for your candid discussion on that.

Relations—bilateral relations with our countries are very strong and very good. And I can't thank you enough for coming. Welcome.

Prime Minister Balkenende. Mr. President, thank you very much for the hospitality and the friendship. It is true what you're saying about the bilateral relations between the United States and the Netherlands; they are very good. And also next year—and we have the 400-year celebration of the fact that Henry Hudson came, on behalf of the Dutch East Indian Company, to Manhattan.

President Bush. That's right.

Prime Minister Balkenende. And they'll be celebrated then. And just an example of the long tradition we have.

At this moment, we're working together. And you referred to that, by example, in Africa. In the struggle against HIV/AIDS, we are working together. We also are working together on the issue of deforestation in Latin America. There will be a meeting in Suriname in September, and we are supporting that event. And thanks for your remarks about our cooperation and the activities of our military people in Afghanistan. It's necessary to work together.

Of course when you are friends, sometimes there are issues you do not agree about, but because you have a friendship,