

The President's Radio Address *December 6, 2008*

Good morning. This weekend I'm attending the Army-Navy game in Philadelphia, and I'm looking forward to a great day of college football. But more importantly, I'm looking forward to spending time with the brave men and women of the United States military.

Throughout the past 8 years, I've seen the tremendous talent and courage of those who wear the uniform. Their efforts have overthrown tyrants, made our Nation safer, put terrorists on the run, and opened the door to liberty for more than 50 million people. And now, thanks to their work in Iraq and the courage of the Iraqi people, a hopeful new era is dawning for their democracy and ours.

Earlier this week, Iraq's Presidency Council approved two landmark agreements that will solidify Iraq's democratic gains, affirm its sovereignty, and put its relations with the United States on a strong and steady footing.

The first agreement that America and Iraq have signed is called a strategic framework agreement. This pact sets out a common vision for U.S.-Iraqi relations in the years ahead. Under this agreement, we will work together to bring greater stability to Iraq and the region. We'll promote trade and investment between our nations. And we will support Iraq's leaders and their citizens as they strengthen their democratic institutions.

Only a few years ago, such an agreement was unimaginable. Chaos and violence were consuming Iraq. Terrorists were seizing new ground and using violence to divide the Iraqi people along sectarian lines. And the nation was nearing the point of political collapse and civil war.

Today, violence is down dramatically. Our forces have struck powerful blows against Al Qaida. The Iraqi military is growing in capability, taking the lead in the fight

against the extremists, and working across sectarian lines. Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish leaders are sitting together at the same table to peacefully resolve their differences and chart their country's future. And there is hope in the eyes of young Iraqis for the first time in many years.

The second agreement that America and Iraq have signed is a security agreement, known as a status of forces agreement. One of the primary purposes of this agreement is to ensure protection for our troops and Defense Department civilians as the Iraqi Government begins to exercise greater sovereignty. Our military commanders have assured me that the agreement's provisions meet this purpose. At the same time, it also respects the authority of the Iraqi Government. And it lays out a framework for the withdrawal of American forces in Iraq, a withdrawal that is possible because of the success of the surge.

This withdrawal will take place in two stages. The first stage will occur next year, when Iraqi forces assume the lead for security operations in all major population centers, while U.S. combat forces move out of Iraqi cities and move into an overwatch role. After this transition has occurred, the drawdown of American forces will continue to the second stage, with all U.S. forces returning home from Iraq by the end of 2011.

As we enter this new phase in America's relations with Iraq, we have an opportunity to adopt a new perspective here at home. There were legitimate differences of opinion about the initial decision to remove Saddam Hussein and the subsequent conduct of the war. But now the surge and the courage of brave Iraqis have turned the situation around. And Americans should be able to agree that it is in our Nation's strategic and moral interests to support the

free and democratic Iraq that is emerging in the heart of the Middle East.

The American people have sacrificed a great deal to reach this moment. The battle in Iraq has required a large amount of time and a large amount of money. Our men and women in uniform have carried out difficult and dangerous missions and endured long separations from friends and family. And thousands of our finest citizens have given their lives to make our country safer and bring us to this new day. The war in Iraq is not yet over, but thanks to these agreements and the courage of

our men and women in Iraq, it is decisively on its way to being won.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:50 a.m. on December 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 5, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Union League of Philadelphia's Unveiling of the President's Portrait in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania December 6, 2008

Good morning. Welcome to my hanging. [Laughter] Thank you for coming, and thank you for your warm welcome.

First, I'd like to compliment Mark Carder. He did a really fine job with a challenging subject. [Laughter] I was taken aback by how much gray paint you had to use—[laughter]—which speaks more about my job than yours. [Laughter] But thanks a lot. It's been a joy to work with you, and I'm confident this portrait will stand the test of time.

I want to thank Fred and Frank for welcoming me here. I thank you for the medal. I'm keeping pretty good company, which I will speak about in a minute.

First of all, I do want to thank the board of directors of the Union League for taking time out of your Saturday to be here. And I appreciate all the guests who have come as well.

I particularly want to say thanks to my friend Arlen Specter for joining us, and he—[applause]. It's been a joy working with you, most of the time. [Laughter] He's a pretty independent-minded fellow—[laughter]—who is honest and decent. And

like me, he married very well. So Joan, thanks for being here, and I appreciate you supporting this good man during some very difficult times.

I thank the Hoopers for paying for this work. I thank Jim Straw and the Abraham Lincoln Foundation and the foundation members who are here today. I appreciate you preserving the legacy of a good man.

I am—it turns out, this award had been given to folks I have had the honor of serving with: Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld, Secretary Tom Ridge—three good men who are dedicated and patriot public servants.

I'm especially proud to be a co-recipient with a guy I call 41, the 1987 Gold Medal Award winner, the guy I call dad; you call him President Bush. We owe our achievements to the same savvy political counselor and firm disciplinarian, Barbara. [Laughter] And they're both doing well, by the way. Mother is coming out of the hospital. I hope they don't put this on TV, but she's a tough old bird—[laughter]—whose spirits are soaring high.