

which said loud and clear: Our country supports the men and women in uniform; not only do we support those brave souls who are sacrificing on our behalf, but we want to thank their parents and their families for their dedication as well.

As Secretary Rumsfeld said, we're making progress. We will stay on task until we've achieved our objective, which is to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and free the Iraqi people so they can live in a society that is hopeful and democratic and at peace in its neighborhood.

All of us involved here in Washington are extremely proud of the skill and bravery of our young Americans who are willing to sacrifice for something greater than themselves.

So it's my honor to welcome the Members here. We will continue to keep them briefed as this war progresses. And I want to thank them for the unity, the message of unity.

Thank you all for coming.

Secretary Rumsfeld's Briefing

Q. Is Saddam dead or alive, sir?

The President. Secretary Rumsfeld will be briefing today.

Q. Do you want to give us any details, as the Commander in Chief, of how things are going?

The President. Secretary Rumsfeld will be briefing today.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:17 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A reporter referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of the Budget Resolution

March 21, 2003

As we engage in action to ensure freedom and security, it is imperative that we stay focused on important domestic priorities, including creating jobs and strengthening economic growth at home. With passage of the budget resolution, the House has spoken clearly that future economic growth and job creation requires passing the bold plan that I proposed. I commend the House for its timely action and look forward to working with Congress to ensure that we fund our

priorities, enact policies to spur growth, and restrain spending.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Commencement of Military Operations Against Iraq

March 21, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On March 18, 2003, I made available to you, consistent with section 3(b) of the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), my determination that further diplomatic and other peaceful means alone will neither adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq, nor lead to enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

I have reluctantly concluded, along with other coalition leaders, that only the use of armed force will accomplish these objectives and restore international peace and security in the area. I have also determined that the use of armed force against Iraq is consistent with the United States and other countries continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. United States objectives also support a transition to democracy in Iraq, as contemplated by the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-338).

Consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), I now inform you that pursuant to my authority as Commander in Chief and consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1) and the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), I directed U.S. Armed Forces, operating with other coalition forces, to commence combat operations on March 19, 2003, against Iraq.