

I look forward to the debate, for people saying, “Oh, gosh, the world would be better off if Saddam Hussein were still in power.” I think we’d have trouble finding takers, particularly those in Iraq as well. They’re now living in a free society, and I repeat, it’s hard work to go from Saddam Hussein to a free society. But we’ll get there. And we’ll get there because people want to be free. That’s why we’ll get there. People long to live in freedom. And the United States—and I will continue to make it clear that we will not abandon those who are building free societies, whether it be in Afghanistan or whether it be in Iraq.

Richard [Richard Benedetto, USA Today].

Movement Toward Democracy in Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President, there have been some reports that the Afghan Government has been cooperating with warlords, former warlords in Afghanistan, and I wondered if you talked about that with President Karzai today—

President Bush. Yes, I did.

Q. —and how you feel about it?

President Bush. I did, and he can answer the question, what he told me.

President Karzai. Yes. See, Afghanistan is emerging from years of oppression to a free, democratic society. And in democracy, you are supposed to be talking to each other. You are supposed to be preparing the country for a better future by negotiating and by understanding each other. And as the Afghan President, it’s my job to take that nation, the Afghan people, into a better future, through stability and peace, to a higher degree of democracy, to the elections. It’s my job to do that peacefully. It’s my job to keep stability and peace in Afghanistan. And I will talk to anybody that comes to talk to me about stability and peace and about movement towards democracy.

No deals have been made. No coalitions have been made, and no coalition will be made. And they did not ask for it. First of all, we don’t call them warlords. Some of those people are respected leaders of the Afghan resistance. Some of them are former Presidents, and we respect them in Afghanistan. Yes, there are bad people in the country

as well with whom we’re not making a deal, with whom we are not talking. This country is moving forward. It’s a society now emerging with a strong civil society sense in institutions, and that’s what we are doing there.

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you very much.

President Karzai. Thanks very much.

President Bush. Lunch awaits us.

President Karzai. Lunch awaits us, indeed. Thank you.

NOTE: The President’s news conference began at 11:27 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq which began in early April; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi interim government; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal, who was found dead in Baghdad, Iraq, on August 19, 2002. President Karzai referred to Mullah Omar, head of the deposed Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan

June 15, 2004

The United States and Afghanistan are working together to keep Afghanistan irreversibly on the path toward constitutional democracy and toward an honored place in the world community as a nation that invests in its people and provides its citizens with economic opportunity and security. President Bush and President Karzai applaud the efforts of coalition and Afghan forces and of countless Afghan and international workers who have joined to build a new Afghanistan on the ruins of the old. Afghanistan today represents an enormous strategic success for the United States and the world and a political and economic success for the Afghan people who have endured a quarter century of conflict. A country that was seized by terrorists to serve as the global headquarters of hate and oppression is now returned to her people and has become a land of liberty and

opportunity for Afghans and a strong ally in the international war on terror.

President Karzai conveys his heartfelt thanks to the American people for their continued support and recognizes the American servicemen and servicewomen who are fighting—and especially those who have died—alongside Afghan and other coalition forces to secure a better future for his country. President Karzai underscores that Afghan and coalition forces are winning the war against terror in Afghanistan, even as reprehensible but isolated attacks continue against aid organizations, coalition forces, and Afghan civilians. These attacks will not be allowed to deny the Afghan people their rightful future.

President Bush joins President Karzai in acknowledging the indispensable support of the United Nations, NATO, and many international partners in the historic effort to secure and rebuild Afghanistan. The effort has been a model of international collaboration, and its success will be a lasting tribute to all who have joined together with the Afghan people in this common task.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

President Bush and President Karzai acknowledge the ties of mutual friendship and interest that bind the two countries together and pledge to build on these ties, forging a broad and lasting partnership for the future. This partnership will embrace a range of activities that represent shared interests in building democracy, investing in the Afghan people, creating economic opportunity, and strengthening security.

Promoting Democratic Governance

The United States and Afghanistan share the common conviction that democracy is the foundation of lasting stability. Afghanistan has a new constitution that offers a solid foundation for its future as a democracy that respects civil liberties and the rights of women and minorities. Presidential and Parliamentary elections are planned for September, and so far three million Afghans have registered to vote, including a million women.

The United States pledges its continued full support as Afghans go to the polls and

begin to build the institutions of democracy, including a Parliament that is responsive to the needs of the people. The United States will launch a new two-year program to train parliamentarians and equip them to fulfill their constitutional role. This program complements the efforts of other international donors to support Afghanistan's democratic process.

Investing in People

The United States and Afghanistan share the common conviction that to invest in people is to invest in the future. Afghans will go to the polls amid countless tangible signs of progress, including hundreds of new schools, thousands of newly-trained teachers, and millions of new textbooks. Over 140 clinics have been constructed, 3,400 health workers have been trained, and over 4 million children vaccinated.

Afghanistan's richest resource is its people, and President Bush joins President Karzai in recognizing the central importance of training and education programs. The United States is now inaugurating a set of fellowship and exchange programs that will bring Afghan scholars and youth to the United States. The United States will also support a new \$5 million Women's Teacher Training Institute in Kabul to remedy the critical shortage of certified teachers in the provinces. Graduates of the teacher training program will return to their provinces to train others, engaging thousands of children and young adults and building literacy in rural Afghanistan.

Strengthening Economic Opportunity

The United States and Afghanistan share the common conviction that with economic opportunity Afghan men and women will forge a new future for themselves and their country. Afghanistan has a stable currency and an economy that grew 30 percent last year. Its cities are bustling with commerce and investment is growing. It has thousands of new wells and irrigation works and hundreds of miles of new roads that are steadily drawing the country together again after decades of war and destruction.

President Karzai emphasizes his determination to set Afghanistan on the path to sustainable economic growth and financial

self-sufficiency. He recognizes that international aid cannot and should not last forever and views private investment and market forces as the long-term engine of economic growth. Afghanistan has signaled that it is committed to integrating into the global economic community and plans to seek WTO observer status. To promote bilateral economic ties, the United States and Afghanistan announce their intent to pursue a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. The United States is also pleased to announce that work will begin this month on three new industrial parks that will spur foreign and domestic investment. The United States and Afghanistan see the power sector as a central priority in the next stage of Afghanistan's development and will work together to develop power generation capacity and electricity distribution networks. To help create opportunities for women, the United States is dedicating \$5 million to fund training programs and grants for small businesses, providing Afghan women with sustainable jobs, management skills training, and a self-sustaining credit facility.

Enhancing Security

The United States and Afghanistan share a common conviction that success in establishing security and attacking the narcotics trade is essential for progress on all fronts. President Bush reaffirms the commitment of the United States to provide continued support in the security arena, and President Karzai reports that Afghanistan has already made significant progress. Its National Army is 9,500 strong and growing, and is being deployed to the far reaches of the country. Its U.S.- and German-trained police force now numbers 18,300 and will soon reach 24,500. The United States is encouraged by President Karzai's decree requiring the disarmament, demobilization, and integration of all militias and pledges to support its full implementation.

Building on this strong foundation, the United States and Afghanistan announce their intent to establish a long-term security relationship that will include continued training and materiel support. The United States will continue helping Afghanistan establish its National Army—including regional com-

mands—and will further strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Defense and General Staff. President Karzai reaffirms his commitment to build a strong economy, free of drug trafficking; and the United States is committed to assisting the Afghan Government in this endeavor.

A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

President Bush reaffirms the long-term commitment the American people have made to Afghanistan. He and President Karzai join in recommitting both countries to the challenge of building a democratic, prosperous, and secure future for the Afghan people.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Satellite Remarks to the Southern Baptist Convention

June 15, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you very much, Jack. Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Thanks a lot. I appreciate that kind introduction from a fellow Texan. And I'm grateful for the chance to speak to this annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Jack, you've done a great job, and I'm proud to call you friend.

Laura and I are also thankful for your prayers. I have felt them at crucial hours. Your convention has a proud tradition going back to your first gathering in Augusta, Georgia, almost 160 years ago. You represent more than 16 million Southern Baptists and congregations all across our country and many others who serve as missionaries far from home. And all of you are living out the high calling of spreading the good news and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

Since I spoke to this convention 2 years ago, our country has been meeting great challenges. To defend our Nation, we have continued to pursue terrorists wherever they hide and plan, and one by one, we are bringing them to justice. In Afghanistan, we are standing with the Afghan people as they move toward free elections. In Iraq, America and our allies have set an entire nation free from the rule of a dictator. And at the end