

Week Ending Friday, March 24, 2006

Proclamation 7989—Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 2006

March 17, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On Greek Independence Day, we celebrate the proud heritage of Greek Americans, recognize the longstanding friendship between the United States and Greece, and reaffirm our shared desire to spread freedom to people around the world.

Greece is the birthplace of democratic principles, and the story of modern Greek independence demonstrates the power of liberty. On March 25, 1821, Greek revolutionaries declared their independence from the Ottoman Empire after centuries of imperial rule. This bold action began an 11-year war to secure their freedom and gain recognition as a sovereign country. Americans at the time identified with the Greek struggle and provided support to aid the effort. Leaders such as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison encouraged the Greek cause and supported the desire for a representative government that would ensure liberty and justice for all its citizens, and they offered our Constitution as a model for consideration.

A strong cooperation and friendship has developed between Greece and America, and our Nation has benefited from the contributions of Greek immigrants. The hard work of Greek Americans has made our country stronger and influenced our literature, arts, businesses, politics, education, and entertainment. The faith, traditions, and patriotism of Greek Americans have enriched our society.

The United States and Greece are bound together by common values and a deep de-

sire to protect and extend freedom and peace. On this special occasion, we celebrate our friendship and our commitment to advancing democracy, prosperity, and security.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 25, 2006, as Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 21, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 22. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

March 18, 2006

Good morning. In recent weeks, Americans have seen horrific images from Iraq: the bombing of a great house of worship in Samarra, sectarian reprisals between Sunnis and Shi'as, and car bombings and kidnappings. Amid continued reports about the tense situation in parts of that country, it may seem difficult at times to understand how we can say that progress is being made. But the reaction to the recent violence by Iraq's leaders is a clear sign of Iraq's commitment to democracy.

I'm encouraged to see that Iraqi political leaders are making good progress toward

forming a unity government, despite the recent violence. Our Ambassador to Iraq, Zal Khalilzad, reports that the violence has created a new sense of urgency among these leaders to form a national unity government as quickly as possible. I urge them to continue their work to put aside their differences, to reach out across political, religious, and sectarian lines, and to form a government that can confront the terrorist threat and earn the trust and confidence of all Iraqis.

I also remain optimistic because, slowly but surely, our strategy is getting results. This month, I'm giving a series of speeches to update the American people on that strategy. I'm discussing the progress we are making, the lessons we have learned from our experience, and how we are fixing what has not worked. This past week, I discussed the security element of our strategy. I spoke about our increasingly successful efforts to train Iraqi security forces to take the lead in the fight against the terrorists. And I described our strengthened efforts to defeat the threat of improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

On Monday, I will give a speech discussing how we are working with all elements of Iraqi society to remove the terrorists and restore order in Iraqi cities, to rebuild homes and communities, and to achieve the stability that can come only from freedom. I will also share some concrete examples of how this approach is succeeding—evidence of real progress that is too often lost amid the more dramatic reports of violence.

Sunday marks the third anniversary of the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The decision by the United States and our coalition partners to remove Saddam Hussein from power was a difficult decision, and it was the right decision. America and the world are safer today without Saddam Hussein in power. He is no longer oppressing the Iraqi people, sponsoring terror, and threatening the world. He is now being tried for his crimes, and over 25 million Iraqis now live in freedom. This is an achievement America and our allies can be proud of.

These past 3 years have tested our resolve. We've seen hard days and setbacks. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, the terrorists made Iraq the central front in the war on terror,

in an attempt to turn that country into a safe haven where they can plan more attacks against America. The fighting has been tough. The enemy has proved brutal and relentless. We have changed our approach in many areas to reflect the hard realities on the ground. And our troops have shown magnificent courage and made tremendous sacrifices.

These sacrifices by our coalition forces—and the sacrifices of Iraqis—have given Iraq this historic opportunity to form a democratic government and rebuild itself after decades of tyranny. In the past 3 years, Iraqis have gone from living under a brutal tyrant to liberation, sovereignty, free elections, a constitutional referendum, and last December, elections for a fully constitutional government. By their courage, the Iraqi people have spoken and made their intentions clear: They want to live in a democracy and shape their own destiny.

In this fight, the American and Iraqi people share the same enemies because we stand for freedom. The security of our country is directly linked to the liberty of the Iraqi people, and we will settle for nothing less than complete victory. Victory will come when the terrorists and Saddamists can no longer threaten Iraq's democracy, when the Iraqi security forces can provide for the safety of their own citizens, and when Iraq is not a safe haven for the terrorists to plot new attacks against our Nation.

More fighting and sacrifice will be required to achieve this victory, and for some, the temptation to retreat and abandon our commitments is strong. Yet there is no peace, there's no honor, and there's no security in retreat. So America will not abandon Iraq to the terrorists who want to attack us again. We will finish the mission. By defeating the terrorists in Iraq, we will bring greater security to our own country. And when victory is achieved, our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:38 a.m. on March 17 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 17 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office

of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Arrival From Camp David, Maryland

March 19, 2006

Progress in Iraq

This morning I had a phone call with our Ambassador to Iraq, and the Ambassador informed me of the progress that the Iraqis are making toward forming a unity government. I encouraged the Iraqi leaders to continue to work hard to get this Government up and running. The Iraqi people voted for democracy last December; 75 percent of the eligible citizens went to the polls to vote. And now the Iraqi leaders are working together to enact a Government that reflects the will of the people. And so I'm encouraged by the progress; the Ambassador was encouraged by it.

Today, as well, marks the third anniversary of the beginning of the liberation of Iraq, and it's a time to reflect. And this morning my reflections were upon the sacrifices of the men and women who wear our uniform. Ours is an amazing nation where thousands have volunteered to serve our country. They volunteered to—many volunteered after 9/11, knowing full well that their time in the military could put them in harm's way. So on this third anniversary of the beginning of the liberation of Iraq, I think all Americans should offer thanks to the men and women who wear the uniform and their families who support them.

We are implementing a strategy that will lead to victory in Iraq. And a victory in Iraq will make this country more secure and will help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

May God continue to bless our troops in harm's way. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:56 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary General Jakob Gijssbert “Jaap” de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

March 20, 2006

President Bush. Fine-looking crowd we've attracted here, fine-looking crowd.

Mr. Secretary General, thanks for coming. We've just had a wide-ranging discussion on a variety of issues, which is what you'd expect when allies and friends come together. We discussed Iraq, and I want to thank NATO for its involvement in helping train Iraqi security forces so they can end up protecting the Iraqi people from the—from those who want to kill innocent life in order to affect the outcome of that democracy.

I want to thank you very much for your strong involvement in Afghanistan. A NATO presence in Afghanistan is really important. I learned that firsthand when I went to Afghanistan and talked to the—President Karzai and his Government. They were very supportive of the mission—and thankful for the mission. NATO is effective, and that's one of the things that's really important for our citizens to understand, that our relationship with NATO is an important part of helping us to win the war on terror.

We also talked about Darfur in the Sudan. I'd called the Secretary General earlier this year. I talked to him about a strategy that would enable NATO to take the lead in Darfur. However, some things have to happen prior to that happening. And the first thing is that the African Union must request from the United Nations a U.N. mission to convert the AU mission to a U.N. mission, at which point if that's done, the—NATO can move in with United States help—inside of NATO—to make it clear to the Sudanese Government that we're intent upon providing security for the people there, and intent upon helping work toward a lasting peace agreement.

And so I appreciate your understanding of that. The first time I made the phone call to the Secretary General, he fully understood the challenge, fully understood the need, and it was great to work with a friend in peace to devise a strategy on how to move forward.