

parties in Congress to listen to what they have to say. Congress shouldn't jump to conclusions until the general and the Ambassador report.

When you stand on the ground here in Anbar and hear from the people who live here, you can see what the future of Iraq can look like. That's why Members of Congress from both parties who have visited Iraq have come back encouraged by what they have seen. For all the differences over the war, we can agree on what's working. And we can agree that continuing this progress is vital to making the strategic interests—vital in meeting the strategic interests of our Nation. It's vital to bring in—it's vital that we work to bring America together behind a common vision for a more stable and more peaceful Middle East.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke between approximately 11 a.m. and 12 noon. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks to United States Military Personnel at Al Asad Air Base

September 3, 2007

The President. Thank you all. General, thank you very much. It's an honor to be with you.

As you know, today is Labor Day back home—

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. —so I thought I'd come by to thank you for all your hard work.

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. Every day—every day, you show bravery under incredibly difficult circumstances. Every day, you're doing work on the sands of Anbar that is making it safer in the streets of America. And every day, the United States of America is grateful for what you're doing. I want you to tell your families the Commander in Chief stopped by to say hello, and he said, I'm incredibly proud to be the Commander in Chief of such a great group of men and women.

I'm keeping pretty good company, as you can see. I brought out the A team so they could be with the folks who are making a

significant difference in this war against these radicals and extremists. In Anbar, you're seeing firsthand the dramatic differences that can come when the Iraqis are more secure. In other words, you're seeing success.

You see, Sunnis who once fought side by side with Al Qaida against coalition troops now fighting side by side with coalition troops against Al Qaida. Anbar is a huge Province. It was once written off as lost. It is now one of the safest places in Iraq.

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. Because of your hard work, because of your bravery and sacrifice, you are denying Al Qaida a safe haven from which to plot and plan and carry out attacks against the United States of America. What you're doing here is making this country safer, and I thank you for your hard work.

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. The surge of operations that began in June is improving security throughout Iraq. These military successes are paving the way for the political reconciliation and economic progress the Iraqis need to transform their country. When Iraqis feel safe in their own homes and neighborhoods, they can focus their efforts on building a stable civil society with functioning government structures at the local and Provincial and national levels. And that's important because a free Iraq, an Iraq that's an ally against these extremists and murderers will be a major defeat for the terrorists.

Earlier today I met with some of the tribal sheiks here in Anbar. It was a really interesting meeting. And at the table were the leaders of the central Government as well. They told me that the kind of bottom-up progress that your efforts are bringing to Anbar is vital to the success and stability of a free Iraq. See, Iraqis need this stability to build a more peaceful future. And America needs this stability to prevent the chaos that allows the terrorists to set up bases from which they can plot and plan attacks on our homeland.

The very people that you helped the Iraqis defeat in Anbar swore allegiance to the man that ordered the attack on the United States of America. What happens here in Anbar matters to the security of the United States.

And so I thank you for your sacrifice. I thank you for volunteering in the face of danger. I thank you for your courage and your bravery. Every day you are successful here in Iraq draws nearer to the day when America can begin calling you and your fellow service men and women home.

But I want to tell you this about the decision—about my decision about troop levels. Those decisions will be based on a calm assessment by our military commanders on the conditions on the ground, not a nervous reaction by Washington politicians to poll results in the media.

Audience members. Hooah!

President Bush. In other words, when we begin to draw down troops from Iraq, it will be from a position of strength and success, not from a position of fear and failure. To do otherwise would embolden our enemies and make it more likely that they would attack us at home. If we let our enemies back us out of Iraq, we will more likely face them in America. If we don't want to hear their footsteps back home, we have to keep them on their heels over here. And that's exactly what you're doing, and America is safer for it.

In Anbar, you're doing this hard work every day. We've all come to say thank you. We've come to tell you, the American people are standing with you. They're grateful for your sacrifice. As Commander in Chief, I'm proud to be in your presence on this Labor Day. I ask for God's blessings on you and your family, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:43 p.m.

Proclamation 8174—Patriot Day, 2007

September 4, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

September 11, 2001, was a defining moment in American history. On that terrible day, our Nation saw the face of evil as 19 men barbarously attacked us and wantonly murdered people of many races, nationalities,

and creeds. On Patriot Day, we remember the innocent victims, and we pay tribute to the valiant firefighters, police officers, emergency personnel, and ordinary citizens who risked their lives so others might live.

After the attacks on 9/11, America resolved that we would go on the offense against our enemies, and we would not distinguish between the terrorists and those who harbor and support them. All Americans honor the selfless men and women of our Armed Forces, the dedicated members of our public safety, law enforcement, and intelligence communities, and the thousands of others who work hard each day to protect our country, secure our liberty, and prevent future attacks.

The spirit of our people is the source of America's strength, and 6 years ago, Americans came to the aid of neighbors in need. On Patriot Day, we pray for those who died and for their families. We volunteer to help others and demonstrate the continuing compassion of our citizens. On this solemn occasion, we rededicate ourselves to laying the foundation of peace with confidence in our mission and our free way of life.

By a joint resolution approved December 18, 2001 (Public Law 107–89), the Congress has designated September 11 of each year as "Patriot Day."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 11, 2007, as Patriot Day. I call upon the Governors of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, as well as appropriate officials of all units of government, to direct that the flag be flown at half-staff on Patriot Day. I also call upon the people of the United States to observe Patriot Day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and remembrance services, to display the flag at half-staff from their homes on that day, and to observe a moment of silence beginning at 8:46 a.m. eastern daylight time to honor the innocent Americans and people from around the world who lost their lives as a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United