Thank you all. Thank you for that very gracious and warm Cincinnati welcome. I'm honored to be here tonight; I appreciate you all coming.

Tonight I want to take a few minutes to discuss a grave threat to peace, and America's determination to lead the world in confronting that threat.

The threat comes from Iraq. It arises directly from the Iraqi regime's own actions -- its history of aggression, and its drive toward an arsenal of terror. Eleven years ago, as a condition for ending the Persian Gulf War, the Iraqi regime was required to destroy its weapons of mass destruction, to cease all development of such weapons, and to stop all support for terrorist groups. The Iraqi regime has violated all of those obligations. It possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons. It has given shelter and support to terrorism, and practices terror against its own people. The entire world has witnessed Iraq's eleven-year history of defiance, deception and bad faith.

We also must never forget the most vivid events of recent history. On September the 11th, 2001, America felt its vulnerability -- even to threats that gather on the other side of the earth. We resolved then, and we are resolved today, to confront every threat, from any source, that could bring sudden terror and suffering to America.

Members of the Congress of both political parties, and members of the United Nations Security Council, agree that Saddam Hussein is a threat to peace and must disarm. We agree that the Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons. Since we all agree on this goal, the issues is: how can we best achieve it?

Many Americans have raised legitimate questions: about the nature of the threat; about the urgency of action -- why be concerned now; about the link between Iraq developing weapons of terror, and the wider war on terror. These are all issues we've discussed broadly and fully within my administration. And tonight, I want to share those discussions with you.

First, some ask why Iraq is different from other countries or regimes that also have terrible weapons. While there are many dangers in the world, the threat from Iraq stands alone -- because it gathers the most serious dangers of our age in one place. Iraq's weapons of mass destruction are controlled by a murderous tyrant who has already used
chemical weapons to kill thousands of people. This same tyrant has tried
to dominate the Middle East, has invaded and brutally occupied a small
neighbor, has struck other nations without warning, and holds an
unrelenting hostility toward the United States.

By its past and present actions, by its technological capabilities, by the
merciless nature of its regime, Iraq is unique. As a former chief weapons
inspector of the U.N. has said, "The fundamental problem with Iraq
remains the nature of the regime, itself. Saddam Hussein is a homicidal
dictator who is addicted to weapons of mass destruction."

Some ask how urgent this danger is to America and the world. The
danger is already significant, and it only grows worse with time. If we
know Saddam Hussein has dangerous weapons today -- and we do --
does it make any sense for the world to wait to confront him as he grows
even stronger and develops even more dangerous weapons?

In 1995, after several years of deceit by the Iraqi regime, the head of
Iraq's military industries defected. It was then that the regime was forced
to admit that it had produced more than 30,000 liters of anthrax and
other deadly biological agents. The inspectors, however, concluded that
Iraq had likely produced two to four times that amount. This is a
massive stockpile of biological weapons that has never been accounted
for, and capable of killing millions.

We know that the regime has produced thousands of tons of chemical
agents, including mustard gas, sarin nerve gas, VX nerve gas. Saddam
Hussein also has experience in using chemical weapons. He has ordered
chemical attacks on Iran, and on more than forty villages in his own
country. These actions killed or injured at least 20,000 people, more than
six times the number of people who died in the attacks of September the
11th.

And surveillance photos reveal that the regime is rebuilding facilities that
it had used to produce chemical and biological weapons. Every chemical
and biological weapon that Iraq has or makes is a direct violation of the
truce that ended the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Yet, Saddam Hussein has
chosen to build and keep these weapons despite international sanctions,
U.N. demands, and isolation from the civilized world.

Iraq possesses ballistic missiles with a likely range of hundreds of miles -
- far enough to strike Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, and other nations -- in
a region where more than 135,000 American civilians and service
members live and work. We've also discovered through intelligence that
Iraq has a growing fleet of manned and unmanned aerial vehicles that
could be used to disperse chemical or biological weapons across broad
areas. We're concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using these UAVS
for missions targeting the United States. And, of course, sophisticated
delivery systems aren't required for a chemical or biological attack; all
that might be required are a small container and one terrorist or Iraqi
intelligence operative to deliver it.
And that is the source of our urgent concern about Saddam Hussein's links to international terrorist groups. Over the years, Iraq has provided safe haven to terrorists such as Abu Nidal, whose terror organization carried out more than 90 terrorist attacks in 20 countries that killed or injured nearly 900 people, including 12 Americans. Iraq has also provided safe haven to Abu Abbas, who was responsible for seizing the Achille Lauro and killing an American passenger. And we know that Iraq is continuing to finance terror and gives assistance to groups that use terrorism to undermine Middle East peace.

We know that Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network share a common enemy -- the United States of America. We know that Iraq and al Qaeda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some al Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. These include one very senior al Qaeda leader who received medical treatment in Baghdad this year, and who has been associated with planning for chemical and biological attacks. We've learned that Iraq has trained al Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases. And we know that after September the 11th, Saddam Hussein's regime gleefully celebrated the terrorist attacks on America.

Iraq could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists. Alliance with terrorists could allow the Iraqi regime to attack America without leaving any fingerprints.

Some have argued that confronting the threat from Iraq could detract from the war against terror. To the contrary; confronting the threat posed by Iraq is crucial to winning the war on terror. When I spoke to Congress more than a year ago, I said that those who harbor terrorists are as guilty as the terrorists themselves. Saddam Hussein is harboring terrorists and the instruments of terror, the instruments of mass death and destruction. And he cannot be trusted. The risk is simply too great that he will use them, or provide them to a terror network.

Terror cells and outlaw regimes building weapons of mass destruction are different faces of the same evil. Our security requires that we confront both. And the United States military is capable of confronting both.

Many people have asked how close Saddam Hussein is to developing a nuclear weapon. Well, we don't know exactly, and that's the problem. Before the Gulf War, the best intelligence indicated that Iraq was eight to ten years away from developing a nuclear weapon. After the war, international inspectors learned that the regime has been much closer -- the regime in Iraq would likely have possessed a nuclear weapon no later than 1993. The inspectors discovered that Iraq had an advanced nuclear weapons development program, had a design for a workable nuclear weapon, and was pursuing several different methods of enriching uranium for a bomb.
Before being barred from Iraq in 1998, the International Atomic Energy Agency dismantled extensive nuclear weapons-related facilities, including three uranium enrichment sites. That same year, information from a high-ranking Iraqi nuclear engineer who had defected revealed that despite his public promises, Saddam Hussein had ordered his nuclear program to continue.

The evidence indicates that Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program. Saddam Hussein has held numerous meetings with Iraqi nuclear scientists, a group he calls his "nuclear mujahideen" -- his nuclear holy warriors. Satellite photographs reveal that Iraq is rebuilding facilities at sites that have been part of its nuclear program in the past. Iraq has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons.

If the Iraqi regime is able to produce, buy, or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, it could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year. And if we allow that to happen, a terrible line would be crossed. Saddam Hussein would be in a position to blackmail anyone who opposes his aggression. He would be in a position to dominate the Middle East. He would be in a position to threaten America. And Saddam Hussein would be in a position to pass nuclear technology to terrorists.

Some citizens wonder, after 11 years of living with this problem, why do we need to confront it now? And there's a reason. We've experienced the horror of September the 11th. We have seen that those who hate America are willing to crash airplanes into buildings full of innocent people. Our enemies would be no less willing, in fact, they would be eager, to use biological or chemical, or a nuclear weapon.

Knowing these realities, America must not ignore the threat gathering against us. Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof -- the smoking gun -- that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud. As President Kennedy said in October of 1962, "Neither the United States of America, nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. We no longer live in a world," he said, "where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation's security to constitute maximum peril."

Understanding the threats of our time, knowing the designs and deceptions of the Iraqi regime, we have every reason to assume the worst, and we have an urgent duty to prevent the worst from occurring.

Some believe we can address this danger by simply resuming the old approach to inspections, and applying diplomatic and economic pressure. Yet this is precisely what the world has tried to do since 1991. The U.N. inspections program was met with systematic deception. The Iraqi regime bugged hotel rooms and offices of inspectors to find where they were
going next; they forged documents, destroyed evidence, and developed mobile weapons facilities to keep a step ahead of inspectors. Eight so-called presidential palaces were declared off-limits to unfettered inspections. These sites actually encompass twelve square miles, with hundreds of structures, both above and below the ground, where sensitive materials could be hidden.”

The world has also tried economic sanctions -- and watched Iraq use billions of dollars in illegal oil revenues to fund more weapons purchases, rather than providing for the needs of the Iraqi people.

The world has tried limited military strikes to destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capabilities -- only to see them openly rebuilt, while the regime again denies they even exist.

The world has tried no-fly zones to keep Saddam from terrorizing his own people -- and in the last year alone, the Iraqi military has fired upon American and British pilots more than 750 times.

After eleven years during which we have tried containment, sanctions, inspections, even selected military action, the end result is that Saddam Hussein still has chemical and biological weapons and is increasing his capabilities to make more. And he is moving ever closer to developing a nuclear weapon.

Clearly, to actually work, any new inspections, sanctions or enforcement mechanisms will have to be very different. America wants the U.N. to be an effective organization that helps keep the peace. And that is why we are urging the Security Council to adopt a new resolution setting out tough, immediate requirements. Among those requirements: the Iraqi regime must reveal and destroy, under U.N. supervision, all existing weapons of mass destruction. To ensure that we learn the truth, the regime must allow witnesses to its illegal activities to be interviewed outside the country -- and these witnesses must be free to bring their families with them so they all beyond the reach of Saddam Hussein's terror and murder. And inspectors must have access to any site, at any time, without pre-clearance, without delay, without exceptions.

The time for denying, deceiving, and delaying has come to an end. Saddam Hussein must disarm himself -- or, for the sake of peace, we will lead a coalition to disarm him.

Many nations are joining us in insisting that Saddam Hussein's regime be held accountable. They are committed to defending the international security that protects the lives of both our citizens and theirs. And that's why America is challenging all nations to take the resolutions of the U.N. Security Council seriously.

And these resolutions are clear. In addition to declaring and destroying all of its weapons of mass destruction, Iraq must end its support for
terrorism. It must cease the persecution of its civilian population. It must stop all illicit trade outside the Oil For Food program. It must release or account for all Gulf War personnel, including an American pilot, whose fate is still unknown.

By taking these steps, and by only taking these steps, the Iraqi regime has an opportunity to avoid conflict. Taking these steps would also change the nature of the Iraqi regime itself. America hopes the regime will make that choice. Unfortunately, at least so far, we have little reason to expect it. And that's why two administrations -- mine and President Clinton's -- have stated that regime change in Iraq is the only certain means of removing a great danger to our nation.

I hope this will not require military action, but it may. And military conflict could be difficult. An Iraqi regime faced with its own demise may attempt cruel and desperate measures. If Saddam Hussein orders such measures, his generals would be well advised to refuse those orders. If they do not refuse, they must understand that all war criminals will be pursued and punished. If we have to act, we will take every precaution that is possible. We will plan carefully; we will act with the full power of the United States military; we will act with allies at our side, and we will prevail. (Applause.)

There is no easy or risk-free course of action. Some have argued we should wait -- and that's an option. In my view, it's the riskiest of all options, because the longer we wait, the stronger and bolder Saddam Hussein will become. We could wait and hope that Saddam does not give weapons to terrorists, or develop a nuclear weapon to blackmail the world. But I'm convinced that is a hope against all evidence. As Americans, we want peace -- we work and sacrifice for peace. But there can be no peace if our security depends on the will and whims of a ruthless and aggressive dictator. I'm not willing to stake one American life on trusting Saddam Hussein.

Failure to act would embolden other tyrants, allow terrorists access to new weapons and new resources, and make blackmail a permanent feature of world events. The United Nations would betray the purpose of its founding, and prove irrelevant to the problems of our time. And through its inaction, the United States would resign itself to a future of fear.

That is not the America I know. That is not the America I serve. We refuse to live in fear. (Applause.) This nation, in world war and in Cold War, has never permitted the brutal and lawless to set history's course. Now, as before, we will secure our nation, protect our freedom, and help others to find freedom of their own.

Some worry that a change of leadership in Iraq could create instability and make the situation worse. The situation could hardly get worse, for world security and for the people of Iraq. The lives of Iraqi citizens would improve dramatically if Saddam Hussein were no longer in power, just
as the lives of Afghanistan's citizens improved after the Taliban. The
dictator of Iraq is a student of Stalin, using murder as a tool of terror and
control, within his own cabinet, within his own army, and even within his
own family.

On Saddam Hussein's orders, opponents have been decapitated, wives
and mothers of political opponents have been systematically raped as a
method of intimidation, and political prisoners have been forced to watch
their own children being tortured.

America believes that all people are entitled to hope and human rights,
to the non-negotiable demands of human dignity. People everywhere
prefer freedom to slavery; prosperity to squalor; self-government to the
rule of terror and torture. America is a friend to the people of Iraq. Our
demands are directed only at the regime that enslaves them and
threatens us. When these demands are met, the first and greatest benefit
will come to Iraqi men, women and children. The oppression of Kurds,
Assyrians, Turkomans, Shi'a, Sunnis and others will be lifted. The long
captivity of Iraq will end, and an era of new hope will begin.

Iraq is a land rich in culture, resources, and talent. Freed from the weight
of oppression, Iraq's people will be able to share in the progress and
prosperity of our time. If military action is necessary, the United States
and our allies will help the Iraqi people rebuild their economy, and create
the institutions of liberty in a unified Iraq at peace with its neighbors.

Later this week, the United States Congress will vote on this matter. I
have asked Congress to authorize the use of America's military, if it
proves necessary, to enforce U.N. Security Council demands. Approving
this resolution does not mean that military action is imminent or
unavoidable. The resolution will tell the United Nations, and all nations,
that America speaks with one voice and is determined to make the
demands of the civilized world mean something. Congress will also be
sending a message to the dictator in Iraq: that his only chance -- his only
choice is full compliance, and the time remaining for that choice is
limited.

Members of Congress are nearing an historic vote. I'm confident they will
fully consider the facts, and their duties.

The attacks of September the 11th showed our country that vast oceans
no longer protect us from danger. Before that tragic date, we had only
hints of al Qaeda's plans and designs. Today in Iraq, we see a threat
whose outlines are far more clearly defined, and whose consequences
could be far more deadly. Saddam Hussein's actions have put us on
notice, and there is no refuge from our responsibilities.

We did not ask for this present challenge, but we accept it. Like other
generations of Americans, we will meet the responsibility of defending
human liberty against violence and aggression. By our resolve, we will
give strength to others. By our courage, we will give hope to others. And by our actions, we will secure the peace, and lead the world to a better day.

May God bless America. (Applause.)
George W. Bush
War Message
Washington, DC
March 19, 2003

My fellow citizens, at this hour American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger.

On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign.

More than 35 countries are giving crucial support, from the use of naval and air bases, to help with intelligence and logistics, to the deployment of combat units. Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bear the duty and share the honor of serving in our common defense.

To all of the men and women of the United States armed forces now in the Middle East, the peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you.

That trust is well placed.

The enemies you confront will come to know your skill and bravery. The people you liberate will witness the honorable and decent spirit of the American military.

In this conflict, America faces an enemy who has no regard for conventions of war or rules of morality. Saddam Hussein has placed Iraqi troops and equipment in civilian areas, attempting to use innocent men, women and children as shields for his own military; a final atrocity against his people.

I want Americans and all the world to know that coalition forces will make every effort to spare innocent civilians from harm. A campaign on the harsh terrain of a nation as large as California could be longer and more difficult than some predict. And helping Iraqis achieve a united, stable and free country will require our sustained commitment.

We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization and for the religious faiths they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people.

I know that the families of our military are praying that all those who serve will return safely and soon.
Million of Americans are praying with you for the safety of your loved ones and for the protection of the innocent.

For your sacrifice, you have the gratitude and respect of the American people and you can know that our forces will be coming home as soon as their work is done.

Our nation enters this conflict reluctantly, yet our purpose is sure. The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder.

We will meet that threat now with our Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines, so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of firefighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities.

Now that conflict has come, the only way to limit its duration is to apply decisive force. And I assure you, this will not be a campaign of half measures and we will accept no outcome but victory.

My fellow citizens, the dangers to our country and the world will be overcome. We will pass through this time of peril and carry on the work of peace. We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others. And we will prevail.

May God bless our country and all who defend her.
Good morning and thanks for coming. Laura and I are pleased to welcome you all to the White House. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. Members of my National Security Council are here, members of the administration, members of our armed forces, members of the United States Congress. Thank you for being here. Ladies and gentlemen. I particularly want to thank the members of the Diplomatic Corps who are here; thank the ambassadors for coming today.

We are representing 84 countries united against a common danger, and joined in a common purpose. We are the nations that have recognized the threat of terrorism, and we are the nations that will defeat that threat. Each of us has pledged before the world: We will never bow to the violence of a few. We will face this mortal danger, and we will overcome it together.

As we meet, violence and death at the hands of terrorists are still fresh in our memory. The people of Spain are burying their innocent dead. These men and women and children began their day in a great and peaceful city, yet lost their lives on a battlefield, murdered at random and without remorse. Americans saw the chaos and the grief, and the vigils and the funerals, and we have shared in the sorrow of the Spanish people. Ambassador Ruperez, please accept our deepest sympathy for the great loss that your country has suffered.

The murders in Madrid are a reminder that the civilized world is at war. And in this new kind of war, civilians find themselves suddenly on the front lines. In recent years, terrorists have struck from Spain, to Russia, to Israel, to East Africa, to Morocco, to the Philippines, and to America. They've targeted Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Yemen. They have attacked Muslims in Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan. No nation or region is exempt from the terrorists' campaign of violence.

Each of these attacks on the innocent is a shock, and a tragedy, and a test of our will. Each attack is designed to demoralize our people and divide us from one another. And each attack must be answered, not only with sorrow, but with greater determination, deeper resolve, and bolder action against the killers. It is the interest of every country, and the duty of every government, to fight and destroy this threat to our people.

There is no dividing line -- there is a dividing line in our world, not between nations, and not between religions or cultures, but a dividing line separating two visions of justice and the value of life. On a tape
claiming responsibility for the atrocities in Madrid, a man is heard to say⁴¹, "We choose death, while you choose life." We don't know if this is the voice of the actual killers, but we do know it expresses the creed of the enemy. It is a mind set that rejoices in suicide, incites murder, and celebrates every death we mourn. And we who stand on the other side of the line must be equally clear and certain of our convictions. We do love live, the life given to us and to all. We believe⁴² in the values that uphold the dignity of life, tolerance, and freedom, and the right of conscience. And we know that this way of life is worth defending. There is no neutral ground -- no neutral ground -- in the fight between civilization and terror, because there is no neutral ground between good and evil, freedom and slavery, and life and death.

The war on terror is not a figure of speech. It is an inescapable calling of our generation. The terrorists are offended not merely by our policies -- they are offended by our existence as free nations. No concession will appease their hatred. No accommodation will satisfy their endless demands. Their ultimate ambitions are to control the peoples of the Middle East, and to blackmail the rest of the world with weapons of mass terror. There can be no separate peace with the terrorist enemy. Any sign of weakness or retreat simply validates terrorist violence, and invites more violence for all nations. The only certain way to protect our people is by early, united, and decisive action.

In this contest of will and purpose, not every nation joins every mission, or participates in the same way. Yet, every nation makes a vital contribution, and America is proud to stand with all of you as we pursue a broad strategy in the war against terror.

We are using every tool of finance, intelligence, law enforcement and military power to break terror networks, to deny them refuge, and to find their leaders. Over the past 30 months, we have frozen or seized nearly $200 million in assets of terror networks. We have captured or killed some two-thirds of al Qaeda's known leaders, as well as many of al Qaeda's associates countries like the United States, or Germany, or Pakistan, or Saudi Arabia, or Thailand. We are taking the fight to al Qaeda allies, such as Ansar-al-Islam in Iraq, Jemaah Islamiya in Indonesia, and Southeast Asia. Our coalition is sending an unmistakable message to the terrorists, including those who struck in Madrid: These killers will be tracked down and found, they will face their day of justice.

Our coalition is taking urgent action to stop the transfer of deadly weapon and materials. America and the nations of Australia, and France, and Germany, and Italy, and Japan, and the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada, Singapore, and Norway have joined in the Proliferation Security Initiative all aimed to bind together, to interdict lethal materials transported by air or sea or land. Many governments have cooperated to expose and dismantle the network of A.Q. Khan, which sold nuclear secrets to Libya, Iran and North Korea. By all these efforts, we are determined to prevent catastrophic technologies from falling into the hands of an embittered few.
Our coalition is also confronting the dangerous combination of outlaw states, terrorist groups, and weapons of mass destruction. For years, the Taliban made Afghanistan the home base of al Qaeda. And so we gave the Taliban a choice: to abandon forever their support for terror, or face the destruction of their regime. Because the Taliban chose defiance, our coalition acted to remove this threat. And now the terror camps are closed, and the government of a free Afghanistan is represented here today as an active partner in the war on terror.

The people of Afghanistan are a world away from the nightmare of the Taliban. Citizens of Afghanistan have adopted a new constitution, guaranteeing free elections and full participation by women. The new Afghan army is becoming a vital force of stability in that country. Businesses are opening, health care centers are being established, and the children of Afghanistan are back in school, boys and girls.

This progress is a tribute to the brave Afghan people, and to the efforts of many nations. NATO -- including forces from Canada, France, Germany, and other nations -- is leading the effort to provide security. Japan and Saudi Arabia have helped to complete the highway from Kabul to Kandahar, which is furthering commerce and unifying the country. Italy is working with Afghans to reform their legal system, and strengthening an independent judiciary. Three years ago, the people of Afghanistan were oppressed and isolated from the world by a terrorist regime. Today, that nation has a democratic government and many allies -- and all of us are proud to be friends of the Afghan people.

Many countries represented here today also acted to liberate the people of Iraq. One year ago, military forces of a strong coalition entered Iraq to enforce United Nations demands, to defend our security, and to liberate that country from the rule of a tyrant. For Iraq, it was a day of deliverance. For the nations of our coalition, it was the moment when years of demands and pledges turned to decisive action. Today, as Iraqis join the free peoples of the world, we mark a turning point for the Middle East, and a crucial advance for human liberty.

There have been disagreements in this matter, among old and valued friends. Those differences belong to the past. All of us can now agree that the fall of the Iraqi dictator has removed a source of violence, aggression, and instability in the Middle East. It's a good thing that the demands of the United Nations were enforced, not ignored with impunity. It is a good thing that years of illicit weapons development by the dictator have come to an end. It is a good thing that the Iraqi people are now receiving aid, instead of suffering under sanctions. And it is a good thing that the men and women across the Middle East, looking to Iraq, are getting a glimpse of what life in a free country can be like.

There are still violent thugs and murderers in Iraq, and we're dealing with them. But no one can argue that the Iraqi people would be better off with the thugs and murderers back in the palaces. Who would prefer that Saddam's torture chambers still be open? Who would wish that more
mass graves were still being filled? Who would begrudge the Iraqi people their long-awaited liberation? On year after the armies of liberation arrived, every soldier who has fought, every aid worker who has served, every Iraqi who has joined in their country's defense can look with pride on a brave and historic achievement. They've served freedom's cause, and that is a privilege.

Today in Iraq, a British-led division is securing the southern city of Basra. Poland continues to lead a multinational division in south-central Iraq. Japan and the Republic of Korea -- of South Korea have made historic commitments of troops to help bring peace to Iraq. Special forces from El Salvador, Macedonia, and other nations are helping to find and defeat Baathist and terrorist killers. Military engineers from Kazakhstan have cleared more than a half a million explosive devices from Iraq. Turkey is helping to resupply coalition forces. All of these nations, and many others, are meeting their responsibilities to the people of Iraq.

Whatever their past views, every nation now has an interest in a free, successful, stable Iraq. And the terrorists understand their own interest in the fate of that country. For them, the connection between Iraq's future and the course of the war on terror is very clear. They understand that a free Iraq will be a devastating setback to their ambitions of tyranny over the Middle East. And they have made the failure of democracy in Iraq one of their primary objectives.

By attacking coalition forces -- by targeting innocent Iraqis and foreign civilians for murder -- the terrorists are trying to weaken our will. Instead of weakness, they're finding resolve. Not long ago, we intercepted a planning document being sent to leaders of al Qaeda by one of their associates, a man named Zarqawi. Along with the usual threats, he had a complaint: "Our enemy," said Zarqawi, "is growing stronger and his intelligence data are increasing day by day -- this is suffocation." Zarqawi is getting the idea. We will never turn over Iraq to terrorists who intend our own destruction. We will not fail the Iraqi people, who have placed their trust in us. Whatever it takes, we will fight and work to assure the success of freedom in Iraq.

Many coalition countries have sacrificed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the fallen soldiers and civilians are sons and daughters of Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We honor their courage, we pray for the comfort of their families. We will uphold the cause they served.

The rise of democratic institutions in Afghanistan and Iraq is a great step toward a goal of lasting importance to the world. We have set out to encourage reform and democracy in the greater Middle East as the alternatives to fanaticism, resentment, and terror. We've set out to break the cycle of bitterness and radicalism that has brought stagnation to a vital region, and destruction to cities in America and Europe and around

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the world. This task is historic, and difficult; this task is necessary and worthy of our efforts.

In the 1970s, the advance of democracy in Lisbon and Madrid inspired democratic change in Latin America. In the 1980s, the example of Poland ignited a fire of freedom in all of Eastern Europe. With Afghanistan and Iraq showing the way, we are confident that freedom will lift the sights and hopes of millions in the greater Middle East.

One man who believed in our cause was a Japanese diplomat named Katsuhiko Oku. He worked for the Coalition Provision Authority in Iraq. Mr. Oku was killed when his car was ambushed. In his diary he described his pride in the cause he had joined. "The free people of Iraq," he wrote, "are now making steady progress in reconstructing their country -- while also fighting against the threat of terrorism. We must join hands with the Iraqi people in their effort to prevent Iraq from falling into the hands of terrorists." This good, decent man concluded, "This is also our fight to defend freedom."

Ladies and gentlemen, this good man from Japan was right. The establishment of a free Iraq is our fight. The success of a free Afghanistan is our fight. The war on terror is our fight. All of us are called to share the blessings of liberty, and to be strong and steady in freedom’s defense. It will surely be said of our times that we lived with great challenges. Let it also be said of our times that we understood our great duties, and met them in full.

May God bless our efforts. (Applause.)