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An Update on the War on Terrorism

What I would like to talk to you about today is the war on terrorism, why I think it's important, the strategy that we're employing, and then some quick operational updates in places that we read about every day. Then I'll take some questions and they can be on anything, whatever you think I can handle.

Let's talk about the nature of the conflict first of all. I believe with all my heart and soul that the danger we face from extremism in this country is probably as severe a threat as we've ever faced to our way of life in this country and that of our friends and allies. You read the statements of the senior extremists, Osama bin Laden and Zarqawi in Iraq. Bin Laden said that it's the duty of all Muslims to kill Americans, in one of his recent statements. Clearly, most Muslims don't believe that, but there will be some extremists who will. What they want to do is create fear.

If you think back to 9/11, and this is why I think it's such a powerful threat, you think back to 9/11, it was 19 people who hijacked airplanes and caused that terrible tragedy and we know the results. One of the results that we don't reflect on every day is the effect 9/11 had on our psyche. Did we lose a little bit of confidence in our ability to live a peaceful life in freedom? Did it impact our airlines? Did it impact industry and other business? Absolutely, some of which are just now recovering. That element of fear—remember 1941 when President Roosevelt talked about the Four Freedoms and one of them was freedom from fear—that's what extremists hope to do, to get us to be afraid. When we're afraid we act in a not totally rational way. That's what this is about, that's why it's so serious. That's why it doesn't take huge land armies or air forces and navies to create this fear. They talk about another attack, maybe one with the kind of weapons they would prefer, weapons of mass destruction, but whatever it is: biological, chemical, nuclear and maybe not a nuclear explosion, maybe just a radiological dispersal device that would render areas uninhabitable for a long time and in the meantime kill lots of people, that's what they want to do. Given the freedom that we enjoy and the freedom our friends and allies enjoy, this is not [unattainable] so we have to work at it.

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So, what's our strategy? How do we combat this? We have three components. The first one is that we have to defend the homeland. There is a new Department of Homeland Security and their role is to put all this together. The Department of Defense's role is to defend our skies. We still work the maritime approaches to the United States and we are involved in a support role to mainly lead federal agencies on how we would help respond to disaster or another tragedy if one were to occur. That's our primary role. I think probably the biggest thing the Department of Defense brings to that whole issue of homeland security is the fact that we exercise very well. We know how to run exercises and how to critique ourselves. So the exercises that combine federal, state and municipal level organizations and work through some of the cooperation that would have to occur is a good thing, and that's probably what we bring to that particular area most.

The second part of our strategy is disrupting terrorists' networks, primarily abroad, and we've had some success. The military here plays a key role but not the only role, obviously. We've had some success against the Al Qaeda leadership. Their senior leadership has been decimated since 9/11, but they're an adaptive enemy and so other folks have filled in. It's a network that's cellular in structure and, like the proverbial snake, you can cut the head off and it will grow another right away. It's going to take more than this effort to defeat terrorism and

extremism. It's part of it. It's part of what has to go on—the hunt for bin Laden and Zarqawi in Iraq. We have eliminated a lot of safe havens. Most Americans probably don't know that we have around a thousand U.S. forces in the Horn of Africa. They're in a place called Djibouti, and they try to bring a regional approach to make the

about defeating extremism and terrorism abroad. The Department of Treasury, I think, has put on ice \$150 million worth of terrorists' financial assets. That's part of it. Every department and agency in our government plays a role in this. We have to work well together, and we have generally done much better since 9/11. There's still more efficiencies and improvements we can make in that regard.

by this whole notion of extremism, using terror to raise fear.

Those are the three elements and I think the one thing you come away with is that when you think about the war on terrorism it's really a misnomer—"war" connotes that this is going to have a finish like World War II, there will be some kind of peace treaty. That's certainly not true. If you talk about a war on terrorism it also connotes that this is something the military needs to attack. Well, as I've tried to explain, this is not a military issue alone; in fact, there's no way the military alone can win the war on terrorism. Now, we've had some pretty encouraging signs on how we're doing on the scope of this war against extremism, this war against terror. We have a very good international coalition. There are over 40 coalition countries in Afghanistan; over 47 coalition countries in Iraq, and we have the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in both of those places working very hard. We've had very good cooperation in the Horn of Africa; we've done a lot of training in Colombia, and for the Philippine government and the nation of Georgia, to name a few. There is a strengthening of the international coalition on this effort. There was a proliferation security initiative that encouraged countries to come together to help stop the proliferation of dangerous materials—weapons, missiles, that sort of thing. A lot of cooperation, and all voluntary, in that area has had some success and has played some role in the events that eventually led to Libya deciding to get rid of its weapons of mass destruction.

As I mentioned, a lot of the Al Qaeda leadership has been captured or killed on the battlefield, and I think most important is that there's a growing discourse among Muslim clerics and intellectuals that are

The third part of the strategy is creating an environment that does not breed or encourage people to join jihads. This is much harder. Obviously, the Department of Defense would not have a major role here, this would be more the Department of State, and clearly the international community, but how do you encourage governments to provide economic and political hope for their populous given that some of these populations are very young, that their education doesn't really prepare them for the century we live in, and that a lot of what they hear in their educational process is intolerance,

hate and violence? That's a much broader issue and one that's going to take a lot longer to execute and be successful at. The military will play a role, certainly, but it will primarily be other departments and agencies in our government and, I would say, the international community. This is an international issue. There are very few parts of this globe that aren't touched

governments there more self-sufficient in providing for their own security with U.S. and international help so that some of these countries in the Horn of Africa do not become safe havens in the future for Al Qaeda or others that need a safe haven to train, to plan, or to just rest.

There's a lot more than the Department of Defense if you think



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starting to disagree that the tactics used by extremists are in any way related to that religion. Think about it for a minute. We've seen the beheadings on TV, unfortunately, and the attacks in Iraq are mostly against Iraqi citizens and usually against men, women and children that just happened to be there when the event takes

I think most important is that there's a growing discourse among Muslim clerics and intellectuals that are starting to disagree that the tactics used by extremists are in any way related to that religion

place—innocent men, women and children. Certainly, this was the case on 9/11. So, I think there's more and more thought from religious circles and intellectual circles that this is absolutely unacceptable behavior—as if there was ever any doubt—but people are speaking out. That's what it is going to take to change people's minds.

Let's go to Iraq. Clearly, it's one of the most visible statements of this whole war on extremism, the war on terrorism. There are lots of challenges left in Iraq, but think where we were just two years ago when Saddam Hussein actually fell. One of the things people don't talk about much, but part of the problem in achieving success in Iraq is what Saddam Hussein and his regime did. They tortured and killed, but more importantly, they absolutely

sucked the spirit out of the Iraqi people. There was no premium for initiative. In fact, if you stuck your head up in that regime, or put your hand up and said, "Hey, I have a better idea," they were likely to pound on your head and that would be the last they saw of you. And so there was this sense of helplessness, and lack of initiative. Not only was the infrastructure dilapidated but so was the spirit of the Iraqi people, and that all takes time to build up.

Now, the good news is that with elections a lot of that spirit came back. A lot of the comments by the Iraqi people during and after the election are very promising in that they're starting to get their confidence back. They were proud of their ink-stained fingers and they held them up in the air to say, "I voted and I'm proud of that." What they also did, though, symbolically, is they were sticking their ink-stained fingers in the eye of the insurgents. Exit quotes from these Iraqi citizens pointed to it more and more: "you don't have any moral authority in this country and what you're doing is wrong for Iraq because you're killing innocent men, women and children."

This does not mean, of course, that Iraqis like foreigners on their soil. Some Iraqis think foreign forces are occupiers and those are all issues that will have to be resolved. Our goal is to get the Iraqis to take responsibility for their future. They're doing that, and I think that the political process we see them going through right now is a pure political process. I'm not that much familiar with political processes, but if you look at the jockeying that's going on and you hear in the headlines "so and so is going to be the prime minister" and then the next day: "well, no, it's going to be so and so," there is a lot of jockeying about who's going to be the president, or who's going to be the deputy president, who's going to

be the prime minister, who's going to be in the cabinet. There's a lot of tension in the system politically, which is a very good thing. It's what you expect in a democracy, that there would be some jostling. There were people who said, "Well, this election may come off but there will be those who are disenfranchised and that will lead to civil war." Nobody knows for sure, but there are certainly no signs right now of any civil war in Iraq.

The signs are that the Sunnis, who did not vote in large numbers in the election, now want to be part of the political process. With the Sunni leadership, I think we missed that boat. We will not miss the next boat. So you see a lot of Sunni leadership coming forward, saying, "How can we be part of this political process?" Again, a long way to go, and it is a dangerous place.

The thing that we ought to be proud of in this room, and I include most of the folks from the international community that are here, as I listened to the names of the countries [represented] a lot of them have

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helped. Particularly the members of our armed forces ought to be really proud of what they did to make that election happen. Twelve thousand had to extend beyond one year to cover the election period. They were all active duty. They are leaving now, and when I talk to our leadership in Iraq they said that these people are very proud of the fact they were able to stay and help with these elections given the way they turned out. But you can remember all

the predictions before the elections and now here we are with a positive factor on where we're headed.

So there are many encouraging signs. One other encouraging sign—the day after the election at one of the Iraqi army bases, 6,000 people showed up to sign up for the Iraqi armed forces—6,000! They couldn't even process them all. That has continued. That has not waned. They are coming in droves. The Iraqis gained confidence in their own security forces and the Iraqi security forces gained confidence in themselves because the inner and outer ring of security of all the polling places was given to Iraqi security forces and nobody penetrated those rings. There are in fact three Iraqis that we know of for sure sacrificed themselves to keep suicide [bombers] from hurting Iraqi citizens. They died in a car. There's a lot of hope right now, but uncertainty continues. We woke up this morning and I think there were three more service members that were killed by improvised explosive devices. So, it goes on and we have to build security and we will do that.

Afghanistan, and then we'll go to questions. The presidential election last October was also amazing. Let me tell you one story about that. It's about the part women play—and by the way, I think 30 or 31 percent of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly are women. It's a big deal. In Afghanistan, of course, we know that it's over 40 percent women who voted. In the province of Bamian which, if you look at Afghanistan, is almost smack dab in the middle, women were told, "If you vote, you will be killed." Not an

idle threat because just a couple of months earlier, not too far from there, individuals were taken off a small bus and if they had a voter registration card they were killed. That included several women that had voter registration cards. They were killed just because they had registered to vote. So, the women in this village in Bamian province prepared themselves in whatever their ritual is to prepare themselves for death. They bathed in a certain way, dressed in a certain way so that if they were killed they were ready

women in Bamian province prepared themselves...for death. They bathed in a certain way, dressed in a certain way so that if they were killed they were ready for death, and then they marched off and they voted. They weren't killed, but they showed great courage, as did the Iraqis

for death, and then they marched off and they voted. They weren't killed, but they showed great courage, as did the Iraqis. There were a lot of Iraqis that showed exactly that same amount of courage. Now, I think it was last week President Karzai, the president of Afghanistan, named a woman to be the governor of the Bamian province.

In my view there are very hopeful signs in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the world that we're making some progress. It doesn't mean that there aren't problems. In Afghanistan you immediately think about the implications of the drug issue. It's an issue that I'll be happy to address if somebody wants to ask the question. But there have been a lot of successes. In terms of reconciliation in Afghanistan, as with the Sunni

community in Iraq, the Taliban now want to be part of the process. The elections really took the wind out of whatever momentum they had and President Karzai is working with the Taliban leaders to decide where do we draw the line, how much of that leadership can join in the political process.

Let me mention one other piece on the whole Afghan problem, and that is that the cooperation that the United States has with Pakistan is essential to hunting down Osama bin Laden, keeping the Al Qaeda at bay and keeping them from coming back into Afghanistan and causing more trouble. So our relationship with Pakistan is very good. NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, plays a central role in Afghanistan. That role is probably going to expand, at least that's NATO's ambition, and it will probably be in the training business in Iraq. It's already there doing it, but it will probably expand even further. So that's all good news.

Sitting here in this hotel, this lovely hotel, walking out on the street, the sense that we're at war isn't really there. You're not going to go home and tend your gardens, you're not worried about rationing. But I think the threat is greater than it was even in those years to the way we live our lives and enjoy our freedom. We enjoy what has been fought for, and people have died for, and this whole idea of fear is real. I think it comes down to a test of wills, it comes down to resolve. You can count on the military for being resolved. The men and women who do this understand what it's all about,

they understand what their sacrifice is all about and they make huge sacrifices, they and their families, and in the case of the reserves, the guards and their employers. But they know what this is all about. We need everybody's resolve and we need patience to solve this.

If you study insurgencies, and I'm sure we have some folks here that probably know this a lot better than I, but I looked at a handful of

insurgencies that go back to the turn of the century. The shortest one was about seven years and the longest took 12 years to finally overcome. So if you think you have an insurgency in Iraq, this is not the kind of business that can be done in one or two years. And again, the key is to get the Iraqis up on the step, getting them to take the front, and they are more and more process which they have to develop, the prison systems and the economy.

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