

Vice President Dick Cheney
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If Karl Rove finds out about this he won't let me out again. Well thank you very much for that warm welcome and David let me thank you for the introduction. And let me thank the AIPAC Board of Directors and the members from all across America for the opportunity to be here today. I have many friends in the hall and I especially wanted to acknowledge Sallai Merridor, Israel's Ambassador to the US and of course, Tzipi Livni, Israel's Foreign Minister.

I also want to recognize the many students who've come from across the country – even some I'm told from Wyoming. Welcome to Washington; it's great to see you all here. We're here today as citizens from different parts of the country – diverse backgrounds, many professions and various political affiliations, yet we find unity and strength in the values of liberty and equality and our belief in democracy and the rule of law and in our devotion, the security of America's friend, the State of Israel.

As members of AIPAC you play a vital role in making the strategic moral case for America's friendship with Israel. I commend AIPAC for the fine work you do – not just at this annual event but every day of the year. It's good to be in your company and I bring regards from the President of the United States, George W. Bush.

As most of you know the President is traveling in Latin America this week solidifying our friendships in that region and promoting an agenda of democracy, economic progress and security. He asked me to convey to this gathering his great appreciation for your efforts, his strong support for Israel and his firm commitment to peace in the Holy Land built on a foundation of security – not surrender.

The President has been clear and forthright about his vision of two democratic States – Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace. He remains committed to the achievement of that vision – nor has he compromised the basic principles he has stated from the very beginning. Peace requires a Palestinian government that recognizes Israel's right to exist, accepts the validity of past agreements, and renounces violence and terrorism totally and completely.

Progress and the cause of security and long-term peace never comes easily – if the United States and Israel persevere in that cause we understand, as Ariel Sharon put it, the right and responsibility of every democracy if it wishes to survive to protect itself and its values. Doing so requires moral clarity, the courage of our convictions, a

willingness to act when action is necessary and a refusal to submit to any form of intimidation ever.

These qualities are a credit to the American and Israeli people and these qualities are tested everyday as we wage the War on Terror. Israelis know this because rockets are shot at them and three Israeli soldiers are now being held hostage, two by Hezbollah and one by Hamas even as we meet here today. We are the prime targets of the terror movement that is global in nature, and yes global in its ambitions. The leader of this movement speak openly and specifically of building a totalitarian empire covering the Middle East, extending into Europe and reaching across to the islands of Indonesia, one that would impose a narrow, radical vision of Islam that rejects tolerance, suppresses the scent, brutalizes women, and has one of its foremost objectives – the destruction of Israel. Their creed is extreme and backward looking; yet their methods are modern and sophisticated. The terrorists use the internet to spread propaganda, to find new recruits and they're employing every other tool of communication and finance to carry out their plans.

It's odd to think of ideologues out of the Dark Ages having a modern media strategy. But the fact is they do. They take videos of their attacks and put them up on the Internet to get them broadcast on television. They send messages and images by email and tell their followers to spread the word. They wage war by stealth and murder, disregarding the rules of warfare and rejoicing in the death of the innocent and not even the instinct and self-preservation is a restraint. The terrorists value death the same way you and I value life. Civilized decent societies will never fully understand the kind of mindset that drives men to strap on bombs or fly airplanes into buildings – all for the purpose of killing unsuspecting men, women, and children who they have never met and who have done them no wrong. But that is the very kind of blind prideful hatred we're up against. And their aim ultimately is to acquire the means to match that hatred and to use chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons to impose their will by unspeakable violence or blackmail. An enemy that operates in the shadows and views the entire world as a battlefield is not one we can fight with strategies used in other wars. An enemy with fantasies of martyrdom is not going to sit down at a table for negotiations. Nor can we fight to a standoff – nor can we fight to a standoff hoping that some form of containment or deterrence will protect our people. The only option for our security and survival is to go on the offensive, facing the threat directly, patiently, and systematically until the enemy is destroyed.

The War on Terror is more than a contest of arms and more than a test of will; it is also a battle of ideas. We know now to a certainty

that when people across the Middle East are denied freedom that is a direct strategic concern of all free nations. By taking the side of moderates, reformers, and advocates for democracy by providing an alternative to hateful ideology, we improve the chances for a lasting peace and we advance our own security interests. In the last two years we have seen hopeful changes as men and women showed their desire to live in freedom, and we have seen the enemy's fierce reaction. In 2005, the people of Lebanon proclaimed the Cedar Revolution and drove out their Syrian occupiers.

That same year the people of Afghanistan elected a Parliament and in Iraqi citizens voted in three national elections, turning out in the millions to defy killers and car bombers and to elect a government that serves under the most progressive constitution in the Arab world. In 2006 freedom's enemy struck back with new tactics and greater fury. In Lebanon, Hezbollah terrorists who are supported by Iran and Syria attacked Israel, killing Israelis and sending rockets into civilian areas and have since worked to undermine Lebanon's democratically elected government. Also in 2006, the Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan waged a new offensive against Afghan and NATO forces. In Iraq, Sunni and Shia extremists engaged in the escalating sectarian struggle that continues to this day.

Our duty is to face all of these challenges with resolve and we're doing so. In Afghanistan where I visited just a few weeks ago American and NATO forces are preparing a spring offensive against Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. In Iraq our goal remains a democratic nation that upholds the rule of law, respects the rights of its people, provides them security, and is an ally on the War on Terror. But for this to happen the elected government in Iraq needs the space and the time to work on reconciliation goals and it's hard to do that without basic security in Baghdad. Our coalition is pursuing a new strategy that brings in reinforcements to help Iraqi forces secure the Capital so that nation can move forward and the political process can turn towards reconciliation. A few weeks ago the new coalition commander, General Dave Petraeus arrived in the Iraq Theater. He sent a written message to his soldiers and with your forbearance I'd like to quote from it at length.

The enemies of Iraq he said will shrink at no act however barbaric. They will do all that they can to shake the confidence of the people and to convince the world that this effort is doomed. We must not underestimate them; together with our Iraqi partners we must defeat those who oppose the new Iraq. We cannot allow mass murderers to hold the initiative. We must strike them relentlessly – we and our Iraqi partners must set the terms of the struggle – not our enemies, and together we must prevail – end quote.

As we meet ladies – as we meet ladies and gentlemen, General Petraeus and his troops are in the midst of some extremely tough, intense, and dangerous work. The President and I have been briefed on the progress. These American soldiers represent the best that is in our country. They're well-trained and professional; their morale is high; they're giving this mission everything they've got and they're doing an absolutely brilliant job.

It's always the case in wartime that the heaviest duties fall on the men and women of the military. The ones doing the fighting never lose their focus on their mission or on what is at stake in this War and neither should the rest of us. Five and a half years have passed since the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the loss that morning of nearly 3,000 Americans inside the United States. As we get farther away from 9/11, I believe there's a temptation that forgets the urgency of the task that came to us that day and the comprehensive approach that's required to protect this country against an enemy that moves and acts on multiple fronts. In fact five and a half years into the struggle we find ourselves having to confront a series of myths about the War on Terror, myths that are often repeated and deserve to be refuted. The most common myth is that Iraq has nothing to do with the Global War on Terror. Opponents of our military action there have called Iraq a diversion from the real conflict, a distraction from the business of fighting, and defeating Bin Laden and the Al Qaeda network. We hear this over and over again – not as an argument but as an assertion meant to close-off argument. Yet the critics conveniently disregard the words of Bin Laden himself; *the most serious issue today for the whole world he has said is this third World War that is raging in Iraq*. He calls it a *War of Destiny between Infidelity and Islam*. He said *the whole world is watching this War and that it will end in victory and glory or misery and humiliation*. And in words directed at the American people Bin Laden declared – quote – *the war is for you or for us to win; if we win it, it means your defeat and disgrace forever*. This leader of Al Qaeda has referred to Baghdad as the Capital of the Caliphate. He has also said and I quote – *success in Baghdad will be success for the United States. Failure in Iraq is the failure of the United States; their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in all their wars* – end quote.

Obviously the terrorists have no illusion about the importance of the struggle in Iraq. They have not called it a distraction or a diversion from their war against the United States; they know it is the central front in that War and it's where they've chosen to make a stand. Our Marines are fighting Al Qaeda terrorists today in Anbar Province. US and Iraqi forces recently killed Al Qaeda terrorists in Baghdad who were responsible for numerous car bomb attacks. Iraq's relevance to the War on Terror simply could not be more plain.

There at home that makes one thing above all very clear; if you support the War on Terror, then it only makes sense to support it where the terrorists are fighting us.

The second myth is the most transparent and that is the notion that one can support the troops without giving them the tools and reinforcements to carry out their mission. Twisted logic is not exactly a new phenomenon in Washington but last month it did reach new heights. At a hearing at the Senate Arms Services Committee, Senator John McCain put the following question to General Petraeus. *Suppose we send you over to your new job, only we tell you that you cannot have any additional troops – can you get your job done?* General Petraeus replied no, sir. Yet within days of his confirmation by a unanimous vote in the Senate – I repeat a unanimous vote of confidence in General Petraeus, a large group of Senators tried to pass a resolution opposing the reinforcements he said were necessary. And of course the House of Representatives did pass such a resolution. As President Bush said this may be the first time in history that a Congress voted to send a new Commander into battle and then voted to oppose the plan he said was necessary in winning that battle. It was not a proud episode in the history of the United States Congress.

The resolution that passed was not binding – only a statement of feelings, yet other threats have been made that would hamper the war effort and interfere with the operational authority of the President and with our military Commander. These too are counterproductive and send exactly the wrong message. When members of Congress pursue and anti-war strategy that's been called *slow-bleed* they're not supporting the troops; they are undermining them. And when members of Congress speak not of victory but of time limits – when members speak not of victory but of time limits, deadlines or other arbitrary measures, they're telling the enemy simply to watch the clock and wait us out.

Congress does of course play a critical role in the defense of the nation and the conduct of the war. That role is defined and limited by the Constitution. After all, the military answers to one Commander and Chief in the White House – not 535 commanders in chief on Capitol Hill. Congress does have the purse strings and very soon both Houses will have to vote on a piece of legislation that is binding, a Bill to provide emergency funding for the troops, and I sincerely hope the discussion this time will be about winning in Iraq.

Anyone can say they support the troops and we should take them at their word, but the proof is when it's time to provide the money. We expect the House and Senate to meet the needs of our military and the Generals leading the troops in battle on time and in full measure. There is a third myth about the War on Terror and this

one is also the most dangerous. Some apparently believe that getting out of Iraq before the job is done will actually strengthen America's hand in the fight against terror. This myth is dangerous because it represents a full validation of the Al Qaeda strategy; the terrorists don't expect to beat us in a standup fight – they never have. They're not likely to try; the only way they can win is if we lose our nerve and abandon our mission and the terrorists do believe that they can force that outcome. Time after time they have predicted that the American people do not have the stomach for a long-term fight. They cite the cases of Beirut in the 1980s and Somalia in the '90s – these examples they believe show that we are weak and decadent and that if we're hit hard enough we'll pack it in and retreat. The result would be even greater danger to the United States because if the terrorists conclude that attacks will change the behavior of a nation they will attack that nation again and again.

Believing they can break our will they will become more audacious – audacious in their tactics, ever more determined to strike and kill our citizens and ever more bold in their ambitions of the conquest of an empire. And that leads me to the fourth and the cruelest myth of all – that is the false hope that we can abandon the effort in Iraq without serious consequences to the broader Middle East. I stand here today as a strong supporter of Israel. And Israel has never had a better friend in the White House than George Bush.

Friends owe it to friends to be as candid as possible; so let me say that a precipitous American withdrawal from Iraq would be a disaster for the United States and the entire Middle East. It's not hard to imagine what would occur if our coalition withdrew before Iraqis could defend themselves. Moderates would be crushed; Shiite extremists backed by Iran could be in an all-out war with Sunni extremists led by Al Qaeda and remnants of the old Saddam regime. As this battle unfolded, Sunni governments might feel compelled to back Sunni extremists in order to counter growing Iranian influence, widening the conflict into a regional war. If Sunni extremists prevail, Al Qaeda and its allies would recreate the safe haven they lost in Afghanistan except now with the oil wealth to pursue weapons of mass destruction and underwrite their terrorist designs including their pledge to destroy Israel. If Iran's allies prevailed the regime in Tehran's own designs for the Middle East would be advanced and the threat to our friends in the region would only be magnified.

My friends is it simply not consistent for anyone to demand aggressive action against the menace posed by the Iranian regime while at the same time acquiescing in a retreat from Iraq that would leave our worst enemies dramatically emboldened and Israel's best friend, the United States dangerously weakened.

We must consider as well just what a precipitous withdrawal would mean to our other efforts in the War on Terror and to our interests in the broader Middle East. Having tasted victory in Iraq, Jihadis would look abroad for new missions. Many would head for Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban. Others would set out for capitals across the Middle East spreading more discord as they eliminate the centers and work to undermine moderate governments. Still others would fine their targets and victims in other countries on other continents. What would it say to the world if we left high and dry those millions of people who have counted on the United States to keep this commitment and what would it say to leaders like President Karzai and President Musharraf who risk their lives every day as fearless allies in the War on Terror? Commentators enjoy pointing out mistakes through the perceptive power of hindsight, but the biggest mistake of all can be seen in advance – a sudden withdrawal of our coalition would dissipate much of the effort that's gone into fighting the Global War on Terror and result in chaos and mounting danger. And for the sake of our own security we will not standby and let it happen.

Five and a half years ago the President told the Congress and the country that we had entered a new kind of war – one that would require patience and resolve and that would influence of this government far into the future. The fact that we have succeeded in stopping another attack on our homeland does not mean our country won't be hit in the future. But the record is testimony – not to good luck but to urgent competent action by a lot of very skilled men and women and to a series of tough decisions by a President who never forgets his first job is to protect the people of this country.

It would be easier no doubt to avoid controversy by following snapshot polls or catering to elite opinion or seeking political refuge in comfortable myths. But President Bush understands as Ronald Reagan did that if history teaches anything it teaches self-delusion in the face of unpleasant facts is folly. Either we are serious about fighting the War on Terror or we are not; either we persevere despite difficulty or we turn our backs on our friends, our commitments and our ideals. I for one have never had more confidence in the outcome because America is the kind of country that fights for freedom and because at this very hour our soldiers are engaging the enemy on the field of battle.

One of the great examples of leadership in our world is that of Ariel Sharon, a man of courage and a man of peace who remains in our thoughts.

In his last speech at the United Nations, Prime Minister Sharon said his great passion in life was manual labor, sowing and harvesting

the pastures, the flock, and the cattle. If the circumstances had not demanded it he said, he would not have become a soldier but rather a farmer, an agriculturalist. But life had other plans for this Israeli patriot and he did his duty until the very ending of his strength. Ladies and gentlemen, the circumstances that have demanded much of this great nation, but we are more than equal to the test; America is a good and an honorable country.

We serve a cause that is right and a cause that gives hope to the oppressed in every corner of this earth. We're defended by some of the bravest citizens this nation has ever produced; we're in a war that was begun on the enemy's terms. We're fighting that war on our own terms and we will prevail.

Thank you all very much.