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President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Today I want to talk to you about a matter of national security that has been in the news -- the National Intelligence Estimate on terrorism. The NIE is a classified document that analyzes the threat we face from terrorists and extremists. Parts of this classified document were recently leaked to the press. That has created a heated debate in our Nation's capital, and a lot of misimpressions about the document's conclusions. I believe the American people should read the document themselves and come to their own conclusions, so I declassified its key judgments.

The National Intelligence Estimate confirms that we are up against a determined and capable enemy. The NIE lists four underlying factors that are fueling the extremist movement: first, long-standing grievances such as corruption, injustice, and a fear of Western domination; second, the jihad in Iraq; third, the slow pace of reform in Muslim nations; and fourth, pervasive anti-Americanism. It concludes that terrorists are exploiting all these factors to further their movement.

Some in Washington have selectively quoted from this document to make the case that by fighting the terrorists in Iraq, we are making our people less secure here at home. This argument buys into the enemy's propaganda that the terrorists attack us because we are provoking them. Here is what Prime Minister Tony Blair said this week about that argument: "This terrorism isn't our fault. We didn't cause it. It's not the consequence of foreign policy." Prime Minister Blair is right. We do not create terrorism by fighting terrorism. The terrorists are at war against us because they hate everything America stands for, and because they know we stand in the way of their ambitions to take over the Middle East. We are fighting to stop them from taking over Iraq and turning that country into a safe haven that would be even more valuable than the one they lost in Afghanistan.

Iraq is not the reason the terrorists are at war against us. Our troops were not in Iraq when terrorists first attacked the World Trade Center in 1993, or when terrorists blew up our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, or when they bombed the USS Cole, or when they killed nearly 3,000 people on September the 11th, 2001. Five years after the 9/11 attacks, some people in Washington still do not



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understand the nature of the enemy. The only way to protect our citizens at home is to go on the offense against the enemy across the world. When terrorists spend their days working to avoid capture, they are less able to plot, plan, and execute new attacks on our people. So we will remain on the offense until the terrorists are defeated and this fight is won.

In my recent speeches, I've said we are in the early hours of a long struggle for civilization, and that our safety depends on the outcome of the battle in Iraq. The National Intelligence Estimate declares "perceived jihadist success there would inspire more fighters to continue the struggle elsewhere." It also says that "Should jihadists leaving Iraq perceive themselves, and be perceived, to have failed, we judge fewer fighters will be inspired to carry on the fight."

Withdrawing from Iraq before the enemy is defeated would embolden the terrorists. It would help them find new recruits to carry out even more destructive attacks on our Nation, and it would give the terrorists a new sanctuary in the heart of the Middle East, with huge oil riches to fund their ambitions. America must not allow this to happen. We are a Nation that keeps its commitments to those who long for liberty and want to live in peace. We will stand with the nearly 12 million Iraqis who voted for their freedom, and we will help them fight and defeat the terrorists there, so we do not have to face them here at home.

Thank you for listening.

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