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President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This past week, I had the honor of hosting Prime Minister Jaafari -- the leader of Iraq's first democratically-elected government in more than a half century.

Prime Minister Jaafari and I discussed our strong partnership, and the dramatic progress his nation has made over the past year. Next Tuesday is the first anniversary of the moment the Iraqi people reclaimed their free and sovereign nation. To mark that historic date, I will travel to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to speak to our troops and the American people about our mission in Iraq, why it remains important to our safety here at home, and our two-track strategy for victory.

ARCHIVES

Radio Address

- [2006](#)
- [2005](#)
- [2004](#)
- [2003](#)
- [2002](#)
- [2001](#)

Radio Interviews

- [2005](#)
- [2004](#)

The military track of our strategy is to defeat the terrorists and continue helping Iraqis take greater responsibility for defending their freedom. The images we see on television are a grim reminder that the enemies of freedom in Iraq are ruthless killers with no regard for human life. The killers include members of Saddam Hussein's regime, criminal elements and foreign terrorists. The terrorists know that Iraq is a central front in the war on terror, because they know that a stable and democratic Iraq will deal a severe blow to their ideology of oppression and fear.

The terrorists' objective is to break the will of America and of the Iraqi people before democracy can take root. Insurgents have tried to achieve that goal before. Two years ago, they tried to intimidate the Iraqi Governing Council -- and failed. Last year, they tried to delay the transfer of sovereignty to Iraq -- and failed. This year, they tried to stop the free Iraqi elections -- and failed. Now the terrorists are trying to undermine the new government and intimidate Iraqis from joining the growing Iraqi security forces.

Yet democracy is moving forward, and more and more Iraqis are defying the terrorists by joining the democratic process. Our military strategy is clear: We will train Iraqi security forces so they can defend their freedom and protect their people, and then our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

The political track of our strategy is to continue helping Iraqis build the institutions of a stable democracy. The Iraqi people have taken landmark steps by voting in free elections and forming a representative government. Prime Minister Jaafari has assured me that his government is committed to meeting its deadline to draft a new constitution for a free Iraq. Then the constitution will be submitted to the Iraqi people for approval, and new elections will be held to choose a fully constitutional government.

These are monumental tasks for the new democracy of Iraq -- and the free world will continue to stand behind the Iraqi people. This past week, more than 80 countries and international organizations came together in Brussels to discuss how to help Iraqis provide for their security and rebuild their country. And next month, donor countries will meet in Jordan to discuss Iraqi reconstruction.

Our nation's mission in Iraq is difficult, and we can expect more tough fighting in the weeks and months ahead. Yet I am confident in the outcome. The Iraqi people are growing in optimism and hope. They understand that the violence is only a part of the reality in Iraq. Each day, Iraqis are exercising new freedoms that they were denied for decades. Schools, hospitals, roads, and post offices are being built to serve the needs of all Iraqis. Increasing numbers of Iraqis are overcoming their fears and working actively to defeat the insurgents. And every Iraqi who chooses the side of freedom has chosen the winning side.

Americans can be proud of all that we and our coalition partners have accomplished in Iraq. Our country has been tested before, and we have a long history of resolve and faith in the cause of freedom. Now we will see that cause to victory in Iraq. A democratic Iraq will be a powerful

setback to the terrorists who seek to harm our nation. A democratic Iraq will be a great triumph in the history of liberty. And a democratic Iraq will be a source of peace for our children and grandchildren.

Thank you for listening.

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