



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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Fact Sheet: Keeping America Safe From Attack

President Bush Discusses Intelligence Showing The Importance Of Defeating Al Qaeda In Iraq

[President Bush Delivers Commencement Address at United States Coast Guard Academy](#)

[White House News](#)

Today, President Bush Delivered The Commencement Address At The U.S. Coast Guard Academy In New London, Connecticut. The President congratulated graduates and their families, praised the Coast Guard's excellence in times of disaster and in the War on Terror, and discussed the bold action we have taken at home and abroad to keep the American people safe. He also discussed intelligence regarding the consequences of an al Qaeda victory in Iraq and detailed examples of al Qaeda's efforts, including Osama bin Laden's attempt to establish a terrorist cell in Iraq that would conduct attacks against other nations.

- **After The 9/11 Attacks, The Coast Guard Assumed New And Essential Responsibilities To Defend Our Nation Against Terrorist Infiltration And To Help Stop New Attacks.** As part of Operation Noble Eagle, the men and women of the Coast Guard are protecting more than 360 ports and more than 95,000 miles of coastline.
- **The Men And Women Of The Coast Guard Are Also Deploying Overseas To Confront Terror Before It Reaches Our Shores.** The Coast Guard is conducting maritime interception operations in the Persian Gulf and patrolling the waters off Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Our Security Depends On Helping The Iraqis Succeed And Defeating Al Qaeda In Iraq

Of The Forces In Iraq Trying To Stop Our Strategy From Succeeding, The Most Destructive One Is Al Qaeda.

The Terrorists View The Battle In Iraq As Part Of The War On Terror. Our intelligence community believes that al Qaeda sees victory in Iraq as a religious and strategic imperative. This would allow al Qaeda to follow through on their stated goals of turning Iraq into a base from which to overthrow moderate governments in the region, impose their hateful ideology on millions, and launch new attacks on America and other nations.

- Osama bin Laden himself calls the struggle in Iraq a "war of destiny" – and has proclaimed "the war is for you or for us to win. If we win it, it means your defeat and disgrace forever."

Osama Bin Laden Attempted To Send A New Commander To Iraq. Osama bin Laden sent Iraqi-born terrorist Abd Al-Hadi Al-Iraqi to Iraq.

- According to our intelligence community, Abd al-Hadi had been a senior advisor to bin Laden and served as his top commander in Afghanistan.
- Abd Al-Hadi never made it to Iraq. He was captured late last year, and he was recently transferred to the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay.

To Protect The American People, We Must Fight The Terrorists Where They Live So We Do Not Have To Fight Them Where We Live**According To Our Intelligence Community, In January 2005, Osama Bin Laden Tasked The Terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi With Forming A Cell To Conduct Terrorist Attacks Outside Iraq.**

- Bin Laden emphasized that America should be Zarqawi's number one priority in terms of foreign attacks, and Zarqawi welcomed this direction and claimed that he had already come up with some good proposals.
- Our intelligence community reports that bin Laden then tasked one of his top terrorist operatives, Hamza Rabia to send Zarqawi a briefing on al Qaeda's external operations, including information about operations against the American homeland.
- Our intelligence community reports that a senior al Qaeda leader, Abu Faraj al-Libi went further and suggested that bin Laden actually send Rabia to Iraq to help plan external operations. Abu Faraj later speculated that if this effort proved successful, al Qaeda might one day prepare the majority of its external operations from Iraq.
- In May 2005, Abu Faraj was captured and taken into CIA custody. Several months later, in December 2005, Rabia was killed in Pakistan. And several months after that, in June of 2006, the terrorist Zarqawi was killed by American forces in Iraq. Successes like these are blows to al Qaeda and a testament to steps we have taken to strengthen our intelligence, work closely with partners overseas, and keep the pressure on the enemy by staying on the offense.

Al Qaeda Leaders Intend To Strike Our Country Again

The Danger To Our Country Is Real And Continuing. While it is tempting to believe that the calm here at home since 9/11 means that the danger to our country has passed.

Last August, British Authorities Broke Up A Plot To Blow Up Passenger Airplanes Flying To America. Our intelligence community believes this plot was just two to three weeks away from execution and could have rivaled 9/11 in the death and destruction caused.

In December 2001 We Captured An Al Qaeda Operative Named Ali Salih Al-Mari Who Was Planning Attacks In The U.S. Our intelligence community believes Ali Salih al-Mari had training in poisons at an al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan and had been sent by 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammad ("KSM") to the United States before 9/11 to serve as a sleeper agent ready for follow-on attacks. Our intelligence community believes KSM brought Ali Salih to meet Osama bin Laden, to whom he pledged loyalty. Our intelligence community also believes he and KSM discussed potential attacks on water reservoirs, the New York Stock Exchange, and U.S. military academies.

We Also Broke Up Other Post-9/11 Aviation Plots.

- In 2002, we broke up a plot by KSM to hijack an airplane and fly it into the tallest building on the West Coast. During a hearing at Guantanamo Bay two months ago, KSM stated that the intended target was the Library Tower in Los Angeles.
- In 2003, we uncovered and stopped a plot led by another suspected senior al Qaeda operative named Abu Bakr al-Azdi. Our intelligence community believes this plot was to be another East Coast aviation attack – hijacking multiple airplanes and then crashing them into targets in the

United States.

We Have Taken Bold Action At Home And Abroad To Keep Our People Safe

Terrorist Plots Against The U.S. Have Thus Far Not Succeeded In Part Because We Have Taken Bold Action At Home And Abroad To Keep Our People Safe. We are determined to stop the world's most dangerous people from striking America with the world's most dangerous weapons. To help stop new attacks on our country, we have:

- Reorganized the federal government by merging 22 different government organizations into a single Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with a clear mission to protect America from future attacks.
- Strengthened our Nation's intelligence community by creating the position of the Director of National Intelligence to ensure our intelligence agencies operate as a single, unified enterprise.
- Created the National Counterterrorism Center where the FBI, the CIA, and other agencies work side-by-side to track terrorist threats across the world.
- Directed the National Security Agency to monitor international terrorist communications.
- Established a program run by the CIA to detain and question key terrorist leaders and operatives captured in the war on terror.
- Passed the USA PATRIOT Act, which broke down the walls that had prevented Federal law enforcement and intelligence communities from sharing information about potential terrorist activities.
- Transformed the FBI into an agency whose primary focus is stopping terrorist attacks.
- Expanded the number of FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces from 35 before 9/11 to more than 100 today. We saw their effectiveness recently when one of these teams helped disrupt a plot by a group of al Qaeda-inspired extremists to kill American soldiers at Fort Dix, New Jersey.
- Launched the BioWatch program, which placed state-of-the-art equipment in major U.S. cities to detect biological agents.
- Placing radiation detectors in all major U.S. ports.
- Placed advanced equipment and DHS personnel at foreign ports so we can pre-screen cargo headed for America.
- Strengthened international cooperation in the fight against terror. A coalition of more than 90 nations is working together to dry up terrorist financing and bring terrorist leaders to justice.
- Launched the Proliferation Security Initiative – a vast coalition of nations that are working to stop shipments of weapons of mass destruction on land, at sea, and in the air.

The Best Way To Protect Our People Is To Take The Fight To The Enemy. In Afghanistan, a regime that gave sanctuary and support to al Qaeda as they planned the 9/11 attacks has come to an end. And in Iraq, we removed a cruel dictator who harbored terrorists, paid the families of Palestinian suicide bombers, invaded his neighbors, defied the UN Security Council, and pursued and used weapons of mass destruction.

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