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President Discusses War on Terror at FBI Academy

FBI Academy
Quantico, Virginia

[In Focus: National Security](#)
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VIDEO Multimedia

President's Remarks

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THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for the warm welcome. It's my pleasure to be back here at Quantico, at the FBI Academy. I'm honored to be with so many courageous men and women who have stepped forward to protect our nation.

Today we are fighting a global war on terror, and here at Quantico you're training and retraining for a critical mission, and that's to defend our homeland. (Applause.) You're fighting the terrorists who wish to harm us; you're breaking up their cells; you're disrupting their financing. You are stopping them before they can strike our country and kill our citizens. Your work is difficult; it is dangerous. I want you to know how much your country appreciates you, and so do I. (Applause.)



I thank the FBI folks who have welcomed me here. I also want to thank the DEA agents who are with us here today. By working to keep drug money from financing terror, you're playing an important part in this world -- in this war. I want to thank the U.S. and international police officers who are training here. I want to thank the local first responders who have joined us. You protect us in times of emergency. I want to thank you for being on the front lines of fighting these terrorists. (Applause.)

Quantico is also known as the "Crossroads of the Corps." (Applause.) In the war on terror, the Marines are serving with valor and distinction. You helped liberate 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq. Today you stand between the American people and the worst dangers in the world. In this war, the Marines will fight, in the words of the Rifleman's Creed, "Until victory is America's, and there is no enemy." America is grateful to have the United States Marine Corps defending our freedom. I want to thank you for your courage and your sacrifice. (Applause.)

I appreciate our Attorney General, Al Gonzales, who has joined us today. General, thank you for being here. I want to thank Ambassador John Negroponte, the Director of the National Intelligence. Thanks for coming, Mr. Director. I appreciate Director Bob Mueller, of the FBI -- doing a fantastic job. Thank you, Bob, for coming. Director Porter Goss of the CIA; Administrator Karen Tandy of the Drug Administration -- the Drug Enforcement Administration -- (Laughter.) Thank you, Karen.

I appreciate the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator John Warner of Virginia, joining us today. Senator, thank you for coming. Senator George Allen from Virginia is with us, as well. And I appreciate the Vice Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Congressman Curt Weldon, for being with us today. Thank you all for being here. (Applause.)

Finally, I appreciate Colonel Mike Lowe, the Base Commander at Quantico. Colonel, thank you very much. I appreciate your hospitality today, and I appreciate your hospitality when I bring my mountain bike out here to ride. (Laughter.)



In London last Thursday terrorists killed dozens of commuters and wounded hundreds more. Americans know what it's like to be attacked on our own soil. Our hearts go out to the many innocent people in London who suffered terrible injuries, and we pray for the families mourning the loss of loved ones. In this difficult hour, the people of Great Britain can know the American people stand with you.

I was with the Prime Minister, Prime Minister Tony Blair, at the G8 summit in Scotland when the terrorists struck his homeland. The contrast could not have been more vivid. We were there to discuss ways to make the world a better and more compassionate place; and in the London, the terrorists were killing innocent men and women in cold blood. These attacks were barbaric, and they provide a clear window into the evil we face.

We don't know who committed the attacks in London, but we do know that terrorists celebrate the suffering of the innocent. We do know that terrorists murder in the name of a totalitarian ideology that hates freedom, rejects tolerance and despises all dissent. Their aim -- the aim of the terrorists is to remake the Middle East in their own grim image of tyranny and oppression by toppling governments, by exporting terror, by forcing free nations to retreat and withdraw.

To achieve these aims, they attacked our country on September the 11th, 2001. They've continued to kill -- in Bali, in Casablanca, Riyadh, Jakarta, Istanbul, Madrid and elsewhere. These kind of people who blow up subways and buses are not people you can negotiate with, or reason with, or appease. In the face of such adversaries there is only one course of action: We will continue to take the fight to the enemy, and we will fight until this enemy is defeated. (Applause.)

The terrorists want to attack our country and harm our citizens. They believe that the world's democracies are weak, and that by killing innocent civilians they can break our will. They're mistaken. America will not retreat in the face of terrorists and murderers. (Applause.) And neither will the free world. As Prime Minister Blair said after the attacks in London, "Our determination to defend our values and our way of life is greater than their determination to cause death and destruction to innocent people." The attack in London was an attack on the civilized world. And the civilized world is united in its resolve: We will not yield. We will defend our freedom. (Applause.)



Our nation has no greater mission than stopping the terrorists from launching new and more deadly attacks. And whether you're fighting the terrorists in Afghanistan or Iraq, or routing out terrorists here at home, America is counting on you to stop them.

To accomplish this vital mission, we have a comprehensive strategy in place. We're working to protect the homeland. We're working to improve our intelligence so we can uncover terrorist plots before they unfold. And we're staying on the offensive. We're fighting the enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan and across the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

And we are spreading the hope of freedom across the broader Middle East. By offering an alternative to the terrorists' dark vision of hatred and fear, we are laying the foundation of peace for our children and our grandchildren. (Applause.)

To protect the American people, we continue to take extraordinary measures to defend the homeland. We created a new Department of Homeland Security. We're posting Homeland Security personnel at foreign ports and strengthening airport and seaport security. We're instituting better visa screening for those entering the United States. We're working to prevent potential terrorists from coming across our borders and violating our immigration laws. We're protecting our nation's critical infrastructure -- our bridges and tunnels, our transportation systems, our nuclear power plants and water treatment facilities, and the cyber networks that keep our government and our economy running.

We've provided more than \$14 billion over the last four years to train and equip local first responders. In all, we've more than tripled funding for homeland security since 2001. We're working tirelessly to protect the American people and to prevent new terrorists attacks. In an age of new dangers, we're doing everything in our power to do our jobs. And I want to thank you for your hard work. (Applause.)

To defend our homeland, we need the best possible intelligence. We face a new kind of enemy. This enemy hides in caves and plots in shadows, and then emerges to strike and kill in cold blood in our cities and communities. Staying a step ahead of this enemy and disrupting their plans is an unprecedented challenge for our intelligence community. We're reforming our intelligence agencies to meet the new threats. We've established a new National Counterterrorism Center where we are bringing together all the available intelligence on terrorist threats. We're sharing intelligence across all levels of government -- the federal level, the state level, and the local level.

We're working with our allies to share information, and to prevent terrorists from obtaining weapons of mass destruction. Thanks to the hard work of hundreds in our intelligence community, we have stopped a number of grave threats to the American people. Together with our allies, we uncovered and dismantled Libya's nuclear program. We worked with Pakistan and other nations to shut down the world's most dangerous nuclear trading network. And since September the 11th, our coalition has disrupted a number of al Qaeda terrorist plots, arrested al Qaeda operatives here to case specific U.S. targets, and caught others trying to sneak into our country.

Our enemy is constantly studying our defenses and adapting its own tactics, so we must constantly strengthen our capabilities. And that's why I appointed a bipartisan commission, led by Judge Laurence Silberman and former Senator Chuck Robb. I asked them to give me an unvarnished look at our intelligence capabilities and our intelligence successes, as well as analyzing our intelligence failures. Two weeks ago, after careful review, I approved 70 of the commission's recommendations for implementation.

One of the new steps we're taking is the creation of the National Security Service within the FBI, to more completely integrate the Bureau's work with the intelligence community. The purpose of this change is to strengthen the FBI, so it not only investigates terrorist crimes after they happen, but the FBI can be more capable to stop the terrorist acts before they happen. The FBI is in the fight. The FBI has deployed its personnel across the world, in Iraq and Afghanistan and other fronts in the war on terror. FBI agents are questioning captured terrorists and uncovering information that will help prevent new attacks on our homeland.

Here in America, the FBI has helped break up terrorist cells and financing networks in California, in Oregon, Illinois, North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Florida and other states. And one of the important tools federal agents have used to protect America is the Patriot Act. I call on Congress to reauthorize the 16 critical provisions of this act that are scheduled to expire at the end of this year. The terrorist threats against us will not expire at the end of this year, and neither should the protections of the Patriot Act. (Applause.)

The FBI efforts are central to our success in the war on terror. The agents and analysts in this hall, and your colleagues around the country, work around the clock to prevent new attacks, and I thank you for that. With every cell you uncover, and every terrorist you arrest, you're making this country safer. Thanks for a job well done. (Applause.)

We know that there is no such thing as perfect security, and that in a free and open society it is impossible to protect against every threat. As we saw in London last week, the terrorists need to be right only once. Free nations need to be right a hundred percent of the time. The best way to defend America is to stay on the offense. When terrorists spread their -- spend their days and nights struggling to avoid death or capture, they are less capable of arming and training and plotting new attacks.

So, together with our allies, we're on the offense, and we will stay on the offense. We have damaged the al Qaeda network across the world. In the

Persian Gulf, al Qaeda's chief of operations has been captured. In southeast Asia, a top strategist for al Qaeda's associate group was captured. In Pakistan, top al Qaeda leaders have been captured, including one of bin Laden's senior terrorist facilitators. We captured the mastermind of the September the 11th attacks. We captured a terrorist involved in the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and a key planner in the attack on the USS Cole. Our ally, Pakistan, has killed or captured more than 600 terrorists, including bin Laden's chief of operations, a man named al-Libbi. Saudi Arabia has killed or captured more than two dozen of its most wanted terrorists.

The terrorists remain dangerous, but from the mountains of Afghanistan to the border regions of Pakistan, to the Horn of Africa, and to the islands of the Philippines, our coalition is bringing our enemies to justice, and bringing justice to our enemies. (Applause.) We will keep the terrorists on the run until they have no place left to hide.

In the war on terror, Iraq is now a central front. The terrorists fight in Iraq because they know that the survival of their hateful -- hateful ideology is at stake. They know that as freedom takes root in Iraq, it will inspire millions across the Middle East to claim their liberty, as well. And when the Middle East grows in democracy and prosperity and hope, the terrorists will lose their sponsors. They'll lose their recruits. They will lose their hopes for turning that region into a base of attacks against America and our allies.

The stakes in Iraq are high, and no one knows the stakes better than our troops. An American battalion commander in Iraq put it this way in an email: "I know that most of you are probably asking if our presence here and loss of human life are worth it. We're here for a purpose. And if not now, when will we stand up to the terrorists that are sick enough to do these things in God's name?"

We are standing up, and the sacrifice is worth it. By helping Iraq's -- the Iraqis build a free nation that is an ally in the war on terror, we are advancing the cause of freedom and the cause of peace. (Applause.)

To help Iraqis build a free nation, we have a clear plan with both a military track and a political track. Our military is pursuing the terrorists and helping to train Iraqi security forces so they can defend their people and fight the enemy on their own. Our plan can be summed up this way: As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down.

Our troops see the progress the Iraqi security forces have made. Captain Glenn Colby of the Rhode Island National Guard says that when he arrived in Iraq over a year ago, the Iraqi police were afraid to go outside their building. Recently, he says, the soldiers were on patrol when the Iraqi police charged past them in hot pursuit of insurgents. He says of the Iraqi police, "Now you see them everywhere. You see them at checkpoints on the streets; you see them on patrol; you see them stand and fight."

The Iraqi people are seeing progress. They're stepping forward to the fight. One Iraqi who stepped forward is a traffic cop named Jamal. Recently, Jamal was training in the city of Irbil with about 200 other recruits, when a red car came hurtling toward them and it exploded. He survived, but many of his comrades did not. Here's what he says: "I saw friends killed and wounded and crying out and blood everywhere. It is not the first time they tried to kill us ... we're not afraid. I'll stay a policeman and serve my country." Americans are proud to serve alongside such brave allies, people willing -- (applause) -- people willing to take risk for democracy and freedom, people willing to sacrifice.

The leaders of the new Iraqi military see the progress. The Iraqi general in charge of his country's elite special forces puts it this way: Before, "the Americans were taking the lead and we were following." Now, he said proudly that his forces were taking the lead. We are working for the day when the entire Iraqi army can say the same thing. Our coalition will help Iraqis so they can fight the enemy on their own. And then American forces can come home to a proud and grateful nation. (Applause.)

We know that the terrorists will not be defeated by force of arms alone. Iraqis need a strong military to engage the enemy. But just as important is a strong and secure democracy that will provide an alternative to the terrorists' ideology of hate. So Iraqis are hard at work building the institutions of a free society.

In January, more than 8 million Iraqis defied the terrorists and cast their ballots in the country's first free elections in decades. (Applause.) Now, their Transitional National Assembly is working to write a new constitution for a free Iraq. And Iraq's new leaders are reaching out to Sunni Arabs who did not participate in the January elections. Last week, 15 Sunni Arab delegates joined the committee that is drafting a new Iraqi constitution. More and more Sunni Arabs say they intend to vote in the constitutional referendum later this year. Support for the democratic progress -- process is growing throughout Iraq, including in the Sunni Arab communities.

As a Iraqis take these steps toward political and military reform, they are building a free nation that will be a beacon -- a beacon of liberty in the Middle East. The success of democracy in Iraq is sending forth the news from Damascus to Tehran that freedom can be the future of every nation.

The Palestinian people have gone to the polls and have chosen a leader committed to negotiation instead of violence. In Lebanon, people took to the streets to demand the restoration of their sovereignty, and they have now gone to the polls and voted in free elections. And as freedom spreads in these countries, it is inspiring democratic reformers in places like Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Our troops on the front lines see this transformation up close. Marine Lance Corporal Marty Schwader recently returned from Iraq. He says, "We really kicked something off in the Middle East, and all the countries over there are starting to really think about the way they want to run their countries."

The heart of our strategy is this: Free societies are peaceful societies. So in the long run, the only way to defeat the ideologies of hatred and fear, the only way to make sure our country is secure in the long run, is to advance the cause of freedom.

We have seen freedom conquer evil and secure the peace before. In World War II, free nations came together to fight the ideology of fascism, and freedom prevailed. And today Germany and Japan are allies in securing the peace. In the Cold War, freedom defeated the ideology of communism and led to a Europe whole, free and at peace.

Today in the Middle East freedom is once again contending with an ideology that seeks to sow anger and hatred and despair. And like fascism and communism before, the hateful ideologies that use terror will be defeated by the unstoppable power of freedom and democracy. (Applause.)

Prime Minister recently said, "There is no hope in terrorism, nor any future in it worth living, and it is the hope that is the alternative to this hatred." So we'll spread the hope of freedom and leave a more peaceful world for our children and our grandchildren.

This week there's great suffering in the city of London, but Londoners are resilient. They have faced brutal enemies before. A city that survived the Nazi blitz will not yield in the face of thugs and assassins. And just as America and Great Britain stood together to defeat the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century, we now stand together against the murderous ideologies of the 21st century.

History teaches us that we can be confident in the future because the darkness of tyranny is no match for the shining power of freedom. There will be tough fighting ahead; there will be difficult moments along the path to victory. The terrorists know they can't defeat us on the battlefield. The only way the terrorists can win is if we lose our nerve. This isn't going to happen on my watch. (Applause.) America and its allies will continue to act decisively, and the cause of freedom will prevail.

Thank you for your service. (Applause.)

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