



THE WHITE HOUSE  
PRESIDENT  
GEORGE W. BUSH

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Office of the Vice President  
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## Vice President's Remarks at a Rally for the Troops

Robins Air Force Base  
Warner Robins, Georgia

2:36 P.M. EDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. (Applause.) That's not bad. (Laughter.) Well, thank you very much, General Collings. And let me thank you for your introduction, and let me thank all of you for that warm welcome.

I'm delighted to be here today, and to spend time with the men and women of the Robins Air Force Base -- a great event, though I'm guessing it was a little more exciting when Jessica Simpson and the Dukes of Hazzard came to visit. (Laughter.) Control yourselves. (Laughter.)

Let me thank Congressmen Westmoreland and Kingston for joining us today, as well. I also want to acknowledge Major General David Tanzi. And I want to thank General Collings for inviting me. It's an opportunity to say thanks to each and every one of you for the vital role you play today in the defense of the nation. I know that the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center goes by the motto "People First, Mission Always." (Applause.)

You've got a great group of people here. You carry out your mission with uncompromising standards of quality. And you've built a record of tremendous results all across the board.

The jobs we've assigned to this base are large and complex. The nation looks to all of you to keep the Air Force flying, to move supplies and people in theaters of operation, to support and maintain the jets flying CAP for homeland security, and to provide combat communications across great distances. The work you do here -- every day and around the clock -- is sustaining the United States military in the war on terror. That war goes on, and thanks in part to all of you, it's a war we are going to win. (Applause.)

Military service, whether active or reserve, requires a family commitment, and I'm delighted to see family members have joined us today. All of our military families make many sacrifices, here at Robins and in communities all across the country. And I want all of you to know that you have the respect of your fellow citizens, and the gratitude of your Commander-in-Chief, President George W. Bush. (Applause.)

Let me also thank the good people who live throughout Warner Robins and Houston County, Georgia. This is a generous, patriotic community, and a source of tremendous support to those who serve. As

the saying goes, "Every Day in Middle Georgia is Armed Forces Appreciation Day." (Applause.)

Each time I visit a military installation I come away with renewed confidence in the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States. Each one of you has dedicated yourselves to serving our country and its ideals, and you are meeting that commitment during a very challenging hour in American history.

Some challenges have arisen close to home, as we have seen recently after the devastating impacts of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. I want to thank those who have provided hurricane relief support including members of the Air Force Reserve, the 78th Civil Engineers Group (applause); the Fifth Combat Communications Group (applause); and 116th Air Control Wing of the Georgia National Guard. (Applause.)

These units have been skillful and swift in a time of need for fellow citizens, and you have our gratitude.

The people of America and the people of Pakistan are grateful to the efforts of the Warner Robins ALC. After the recent earthquake you helped airlift the first relief supplies from the U.S. to the people of Pakistan in less than 48 hours. (Applause.) And your continuing effort to provide airlift supplies to Pakistan is greatly appreciated.

Our nation counts on our military to preserve our freedom and to defend our interests. And in this young century you are repaying that confidence every day that we fight the war on terror. When this conflict began on a terrible September morning four years ago, President Bush said that struggle would be lengthy and difficult, would require our best effort and unfailing resolve. It is tough and it is dangerous to fight enemies who dwell in the shadows, who target the innocent, and who plot destruction on a massive scale. And in this fight some of the most urgent and difficult duties come to the men and women of our armed forces.

In the four years since our nation was attacked and we lost 3,000 of our fellow citizens, members of our military have been deployed on many fronts in the war on terror, from the Horn of Africa to the broader Middle East. In this period, units based at Robins have deployed more than 31,000 personnel; airlifted 5,000 tons of cargo; and played a key role in keeping thousands of American aircraft flying. (Applause.)

Time and again, on every measure of performance, the Warner Robins ALC has been absolutely superb. You've adapted quickly to changing circumstances, and won awards for excellence. Our entire military counts on you, and you can be very proud of the job you've done.

I also want to express the nation's appreciation for the other vital units based here at Robins. We're grateful to the Black Knights of the 19th Air Refueling Group, which is a constant presence in all over the world. (Applause.)

And as I mentioned, of course, we're grateful to the Fifth Combat Communications Group conducting operations worldwide, from the Middle East, to our own Gulf coast.

We're grateful to the 78th Logistics Readiness Squadron -- which recently completed a deployment in Iraq. (Applause.) And during that deployment, eight members of the unit earned the Bronze Star for combat heroism. (Applause.)

We're grateful to the 78th Security Forces Squadron, recently deployed to Iraq and Kyrgystan. And we're grateful to the 116th Air Control Wing - National Guard, active duty Air Force -- a unit that has been constantly deployed in support of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, flying the J-STARS aircraft to locate, classify, and track ground targets. (Applause.)

All of you are part of a team that continues to make history -- removing threats to the United Nations -- to the United States and other free nations, and bringing new hope to a troubled region of the world. As a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, each of you defends this country, and represents the best that is in it. And by your achievements you've made one thing very clear: The day you decided to serve in uniform was a great day for the United States of America. (Applause.)

There's still difficult work ahead, because the terrorists regard Iraq as the central front in the war against the civilized world. We are dealing with enemies that recognize no rule of warfare and accept no standard of morality. They have declared their intention to bring great harm to any nation that opposes their aims. Their prime target is the United States. So we have a responsibility to lead in this fight.

Although we've been in the struggle against terrorism for four years now, the terrorists were actually at war with us long before 2001. But for a long time, they were the ones on the offensive. And they grew bolder in their belief that if they killed Americans, they could change American policy. And they did. In Beirut in 1983, terrorists killed 241 Americans. Following the attack, the U.S. withdrew from Beirut. Time and again, for the remainder of the 20th century, the terrorists hit America and America did not hit back hard enough. In 1993 we had the killing of American soldiers in Mogadishu, the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York; murders, in 1995, at the Saudi National Guard Training Center in Riyadh; the killings at the Khobar Towers, in 1996; the bombing of two embassies in Africa, in 1998; the USS Cole in 2000. The terrorists came to believe they could strike America without paying a price.

And so they continued to wage those attacks -- making the world less safe and, of course, eventually striking us right here at home on 9/11. Now they're making a stand in Iraq -- testing our resolve, trying to shake our commitment to democracy in that country. If the terrorists were to succeed, they would return Iraq to the rule of tyrants, make it a source of instability in the Middle East, and use it as a staging area for ever greater attacks against America and other civilized nations. As President Bush has said, the only way the terrorists can win is if we lose our nerve and abandon our mission. But this nation has made a decision: We will stand by our friends. We will help Iraqis build a nation that is free and secure and able to defend itself. We will confront our enemies on this and every other front in the war on terror. And with good allies at our side, we will prevail. (Applause.)

The progress we've seen in Iraq has not come easily, but it has been steady, and we can be confident going forward. By voting in free elections, ratifying a constitution, and preparing for elections later this year, the Iraqis are showing they value their own liberty and are determined to choose their own

destiny. And by staying in this fight, we honor both the ideals and the security interests of the United States. The victory of freedom in Iraq will inspire democratic reformers in other lands.

In the broader Middle East and beyond, America will continue to encourage free markets, democracy, and tolerance -- because these are the ideas and the aspirations that overcome violence, and turn societies to the pursuit of peace.

And as the peoples of that region experience new hope and control over their own destiny, we will see the power of freedom to change our world, and a terrible threat will be removed from the lives of our children and our grandchildren.

Each one of you is helping to write a proud chapter in the history of freedom. At times you may wonder if your fellow citizens truly realize the extent of your achievements, and how hard you're working and how urgent and dangerous your business can be, how it feels to put in 12-hour shifts in desert temperatures. I want you to know that Americans do realize it, and they're very grateful. (Applause.)

This is not a country that takes its military for granted. We are a democracy, defended by volunteers who deserve all the tools and the support we can provide. Americans appreciate our fellow citizens who go out on long deployments and endure the hardship of separation from home and family. We care about those who have returned with injuries, and we have a responsibility to help on the hard road ahead. And our nation grieves for the brave men and women whose lives have ended in freedom's cause. No one can take away the sorrow that has come to the families of the fallen. We can only say with complete certainty that these Americans served in a noble and a necessary cause, and their sacrifice has made our nation and the world more secure. We will honor their memory forever. (Applause.)

None of us can know every turn that lies ahead for America in the fight against terror. Yet the direction of events is plain to see, and this period of struggle and testing is also a time of promise. The United States of America is a good country, a decent country, and we are making the world a better place by defending the innocent, confronting the violent and bringing freedom to the oppressed. We understand the continuing dangers to civilization, and we have the resources, the strength, and the moral courage to overcome those dangers and lay the foundations for a better world.

You, the men and women of Robins Air Force Base, have met every challenge with focus, with great effectiveness, and, above all, with honor. You have brought credit to yourselves and to the nation. Your Commander-in-Chief and your fellow citizens are very proud of you, and it is my great honor to bring that message to you today. Thank you for what you've done for all of us. (Applause.)

END 2:55 P.M. EDT

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