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Office of the Press Secretary
July 21, 2007

President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. On Friday, I met with a group of veterans and military families who support our troops and our mission in Iraq. These men and women know the tremendous sacrifices that our troops and their families are making. And I appreciate the good work their organizations are doing to support our men and women in uniform in their important mission to protect the United States.

This week Americans saw more evidence of how difficult that mission is -- and how central it is to our security. The Director of National Intelligence released a summary of an important document called the National Intelligence Estimate on the Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland. This assessment brings together the analysis of our entire intelligence community and provides policymakers with an up-to-date picture of the threat we face.

I know you are hearing a lot about this document. Some of its assessments are encouraging, and others are cause for concern. Most importantly, this document reminds us that America faces "a persistent and evolving" threat from Islamic terrorist groups and cells -- especially al Qaeda.

Since al Qaeda attacked us on 9/11, the United States has taken many steps to keep the American people safe. We've gone on the offense, taking the fight to the terrorists around the world. We've worked with partners overseas to monitor terrorist movements, disrupt their finances, and bring them to justice. Here at home, we've strengthened security at borders and vital infrastructure like power plants and airports and subways. We have given intelligence and law enforcement professionals new tools like the Patriot Act, and we continue to work with Congress to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

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The actions we and our partners around the world have taken have helped disrupt plots and save lives. Here's how the NIE report put it -- quote -- "We assess that greatly increased worldwide counterterrorism efforts over the past five years have constrained the ability of al Qaeda to attack the U. S. homeland again and have led terrorist groups to perceive the homeland as a harder target to strike than on 9/11."

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The NIE report also cites some setbacks. One of the most troubling is its assessment that al Qaeda has managed to establish a safe haven in the tribal areas of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan. Last September, President Musharraf of Pakistan reached an agreement that gave tribal leaders more responsibility for policing their own areas. Unfortunately, tribal leaders were unwilling and unable to go after al Qaeda or the Taliban.

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President Musharraf recognizes the agreement has not been successful or well-enforced and is taking active steps to correct it. Earlier this month, he sent in Pakistani forces to go after radicals who seized control of a mosque, and then he delivered a speech vowing to rid all of Pakistan of extremism. Pakistani forces are in the fight, and many have given their lives. The United States supports them in these efforts. And we will work with our partners to deny safe haven to the Taliban and al Qaeda in Pakistan -- or anywhere else in the world.

Nearly six years have passed since 9/11. And as time goes by, it can be tempting to think that the threat of another attack on our homeland is behind us. The NIE report makes clear that the threat is not behind us. It states that al Qaeda will continue to -- and I quote -- "focus on prominent political, economic, and infrastructure targets with the goal of producing mass casualties, visually dramatic destruction, significant economic aftershocks, and/or fear among the U.S. population." It goes on to say that al Qaeda will continue to seek chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear material to use in these attacks.

The men who run al Qaeda are determined, capable, and ruthless. They would be in a far stronger position to attack our people if America's military, law enforcement, intelligence services, and other elements of our government were not engaged in a worldwide effort to stop them. We will meet the responsibility that history has given us; we will adapt to changing conditions, and we will not let up until our enemies are defeated and our people are secure.

Thank you for listening.

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