



For Immediate Release
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President's Radio Address

[In Focus: Iraq](#)

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This week I traveled to Kansas City to address the annual convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I spoke about the ideological struggle that our Nation faces in the 21st century, and the lessons we can draw from the advance of freedom in Asia in the 20th century. America's enduring presence and perseverance on that continent aided the rise of democracy, helped transform American enemies into American allies, and made our country safer.

Next week I will address the members of the American Legion at their annual convention in Reno. In that speech, I will focus on the Middle East and why the rise of a free and democratic Iraq is critical to the future of this vital region and to our Nation's security.

I will also provide an update on the developments we are seeing from our new strategy in Iraq. Every month since January, U.S. forces have killed or captured an average of more than 1,500 al Qaeda terrorists and other extremists. And in June our troops launched a surge of operations that is helping bring former Sunni insurgents into the fight against al Qaeda, clear the terrorists out of population centers, and give families in liberated Iraqi cities a safer and more normal life.

As security improves, more Iraqis are stepping forward to defend their democracy. Young Iraqi men are signing up for the army. Iraqi police are now patrolling the streets. Coalition and Iraqi forces have doubled the number of joint operations. As the Iraqi people feel more secure, they are also forming neighborhood watch groups. They're volunteering important information about the terrorists and extremists hiding in their midst. And the increase in tips helps account for the marked reduction in sectarian murders.

By driving out the terrorists from cities and neighborhoods, we're creating the conditions for reconciliation -- especially at the local level. In

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communities across Iraq, citizens are seeing their local and provincial governments return to operation. Despite continuing violence, leaders in places like Anbar, Najaf, and Ninewah are now working through local provincial councils to approve funds to finance the rebuilding of homes and neighborhoods, to fight corruption, and to create new jobs.

Here at home, it can be easy to overlook the bravery shown by Iraqi troops and Iraqi civilians who are in the fight for freedom. But our troops on the ground see it every day. Last week, a team of American soldiers was meeting with an Iraqi citizens group near Baghdad. Suddenly, a suicide bomber came running around a corner and headed straight for our soldiers and the Iraqi civilians.

One Iraqi man saw what was happening and ran to intercept the bomber. As he pushed the terrorist away, the bomb detonated -- killing both men, but sparing four American soldiers and eight Iraqi civilians. Army Staff Sergeant Sean Kane is one of those who says he owes his life to this brave Iraqi. Sergeant Kane says, "He could have run behind us or away from us, but he made the decision to sacrifice himself to protect everyone." Sergeant Kane spoke to the Iraqi man's father, who said that even if his son had known the outcome beforehand, he "[would not] have acted differently."

The story does not end there. Later that same night, the citizens group contacted the local director of the National Police and told him the location of the al Qaeda cell believed to be responsible for the attack. The National Police immediately conducted a raid that resulted in four arrests.

We are still in the early stages of our new operations. But the success of the past couple of months have shown that conditions on the ground can change -- and they are changing. We cannot expect the new strategy we are carrying out to bring success overnight. But by standing with the Iraqi people as they build their democracy, we will deliver a devastating blow to al Qaeda, we will help provide new hope for millions of people throughout the Middle East, we will gain a friend and ally in the war on terror, and we will make the American people safer.

Thank you for listening.

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