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Office of the Press Secretary
September 10, 2008

President Bush Meets with President Talabani of Iraq

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 [In Focus: Iraq](#)

 [In Focus: Global Diplomacy](#)

 [Video \(Windows\)](#)

 [Presidential Remarks](#)

 [Audio](#)

 [En Español](#)

3:53 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr. President, welcome. First of all, I am so pleased to see that you're looking good. The President's health is strong, and that's going to be very important for the people of Iraq. After all, there's been no stronger defender of a free Iraq than President Talabani. I've known him for a long time. He cares deeply about the Iraqi people, and he has been a strong defender of human liberty.

Mr. President, thanks for the good conversation we had about the election laws, about the need to get a strategic framework agreement signed. And thank you very much for bringing me up to date on your perspective about life inside of Iraq. It's -- things have changed a lot since we've known each other.

PRESIDENT TALABANI: Of course.

PRESIDENT BUSH: And attitudes are completely different now that people realize the security situation has changed and mothers can raise their children in a more normal life. It's still difficult, but there's no doubt that the surge has been effective, which has enabled us to take out troops. Iraqis want there to be fewer U.S. troops, the United States wants there to be fewer U.S. troops, but both of us want to realize that vision based upon success.

And so, Mr. President, welcome back. I'm glad you're feeling good. And thank you for the visit.

PRESIDENT TALABANI: Well, Mr. President, thank you very much for giving me the honor of meeting you again. I think it's clear that we are in Iraq looking to you as a hero of liberation of Iraq from worst kind of dictatorship. And now we are working with your -- with you, Mr. President, for finalizing the strategic framework agreement between United States and Iraq.

