



# The White House

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

HOME



EMAIL UPDATES

[Printer-Friendly Version](#)

## In Focus

- Medicare
- Iraq
- National Security
- Economic Security
- Homeland Security
- More Issues
- En Español

## News

- Current News
- Video
- Press Briefings
- Proclamations
- Executive Orders
- Radio Addresses

## News by Date

- July 2003
- June 2003
- May 2003
- April 2003
- March 2003
- February 2003
- January 2003
- December 2002
- November 2002
- October 2002
- September 2002
- August 2002
- July 2002
- June 2002
- May 2002
- April 2002
- March 2002
- February 2002
- January 2002
- December 2001
- November 2001
- October 2001
- September 2001
- August 2001
- July 2001
- June 2001
- May 2001
- April 2001
- March 2001
- February 2001
- January 2001

## Appointments

- Nominations
- Application

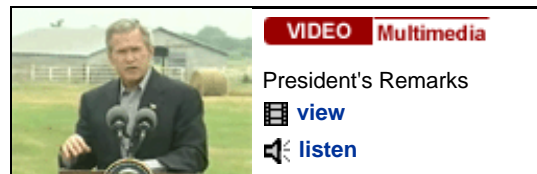
## Photos

[Home](#) > [News & Policies](#) > [May 2003](#)

## President Bush, P.M. Howard Discuss Operation Iraqi Freedom

Remarks by President Bush and Prime Minister Howard of Australia  
The Bush Ranch  
Crawford, Texas

11:17 A.M. CDT



THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all for coming. This has been an honor for Laura and me to welcome Prime Minister Howard and Mrs. Howard to our ranch. We love coming here. It's a place for Laura and me to really spend some private time, and spend time with a friend is -- makes it even more special. And John Howard has been a great friend. The Australian government has been a great friend to the American people. The Australian people are great friends with the American people, as well.

The Prime Minister is a man of courage. He is a clear thinker; he understands the responsibilities of freedom. America is really grateful for the sacrifices of the Australian people and for the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard.

On September 10, 2001, Prime Minister Howard and I stood together at the Washington Naval Yard to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty. The next day, Australia and America began writing a new chapter in the history of our alliance. On September the 14th, just three days after the terrorist attacks, Australia invoked the ANZUS Treaty's mutual defense provisions. Australia came to America's aid in our time of need -- and we won't forget that.

In nearly 20 months since September the 11th, Australian and American intelligence and law enforcement officials have worked very closely together. Our relationship has never been stronger. And that's good. Because together we've broken up terrorist cells, we've disrupted terrorist plots, we've cut off terrorist financing. We brought a lot of terrorists to justice.

And in Iraq, Australian and American forces have stood together once again. We ended the rule of one of history's worst tyrants, and in so doing, we not only freed the American people, we made our own people more secure. By getting rid of Saddam Hussein, we ended the suffering of a lot of people in Iraq. And at the same time, we made peace more possible in the world. All Australians are justifiably proud of the superb performance -- and I mean superb performance -- of the Australian Air Force, Navy and Special Forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As you may know, I was on the USS Abraham Lincoln two days ago. I met with Admiral Kelly. He was our highest-ranking official in charge of joint operations. I said, I'm getting ready to see the Prime Minister in Crawford. I said, what can I tell him about the performance and the bravery of the Australian troops? He said, "They are the best in the world." And for that, Mr. Prime Minister, we're grateful.

We want to thank the Australian servicemen for their service, and particularly want to say thanks to their loved ones, who I'm sure agonized over the fate of their -- of their husband or son or daughter, and tell them that we appreciate their sacrifice, as well.



■ [Photo Essays](#)

## Federal Facts

■ [Federal Statistics](#)

## West Wing

■ [History](#)

We're committed to defeating the threat of terror because we have both felt terror's effects. We remember the sympathy of the people of Australia on September the 11th, and we shared the same sympathy with the people of Australia after the horrible bombings of Bali. The Prime Minister showed he's not only a man of steel, he showed the world he's a man of heart, as well, as he dealt with the great tragedy that affected the Australian people.

We won't tire in our attempts to fight terror. Nothing will deter us. We understand the effects of terror. We also are committed to a world that is more peaceful and more free. We're committed to a stable and democratic Iraq. We fully believe the people of Iraq are capable of running their own country. We will work to provide the conditions necessary for security, repair the infrastructure, make sure that the life of the average Iraqi citizen is back to normal, and then encourage the Iraqi people to decide their own fate -- fate, and run their own government. We agree the U.N. Security Council should move swiftly to lift the economic sanctions on Iraq.

We'll continue to work together to make the world more safe and free. Today, we discussed the Korean Peninsula; we discussed my commitment to move the Middle Eastern peace process forward; we discussed a lot of key issues. I was comfortable in so doing because I value the advice of John Howard. I trust his judgment, and I appreciate his friendship.

Mr. Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER HOWARD: Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. Can I first, for Janette and myself, thank George and Laura very much for inviting us to a piece of American soil that I know has a special place in the President's heart.

To come to the United States is always an experience and an opportunity as Prime Minister to renew the links and the friendship and the affection between our two nations and our two peoples. But to come to the heart of Texas and to be a guest of the President and his wife in this wonderful hideaway -- although it doesn't appear to be very well hidden away with this large gathering today -- is a special opportunity.

Can I thank the President for the kind words that he's expressed about the Australian military participation in Iraq. We, too, in Australia are immensely proud of the way in which the men and women of the Australian defense force discharged their duties. But can I, Mr. President, congratulate you on the leadership that you gave to the world, at times under very great criticism; at time fighting very great obstruction; but you had a resolute, clear view of what had to be done. And we were very pleased and very proud and very determined when the final decision was taken to be part of that.

I think what was achieved in Iraq was quite extraordinary from the military point of view. I think the military textbooks will be replete with the experiences of Operation Iraqi Freedom for many years to come. And the leadership of the United States, with the support of its coalition partners -- Great Britain, Australia, Holland and others -- I think has sent a very important message not only to the region, but also to the rest of the world.

I welcome very much the personal commitment that you have given to the securing of a peaceful outcome in the long-running and bloody saga of relations between Israel and the Palestinians. As the leader of a nation which has been a staunch and unapologetic friend of Israel ever since its foundation, we also support very strongly the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. And we see progress on this issue as being very important to consolidating what has been achieved in Iraq and building on the message of freedom that came out of the operation in Iraq.

Our bilateral relationship is very close, indeed, in so many ways. There is a strategic and political closeness. But more important than that, there is a very deep affection between our two nations. We have shared a lot of experiences. You recalled that very emotional moment at the Naval Dock Yard on the 10th of September, the first time we met. And the next day, of course, the world changed so dramatically. And I can remember returning by courtesy of the United States Air Force from Andrews Air Force Base to Hawaii, and discussing with our Foreign Minister Alexander Downer of the invoking of the ANZUS Treaty, in consequence of what had occurred the day before in New York and Washington.

Australia and America are close friends because, above all, we have similar values. In the end, the thing that binds nations together more than anything else is the commonality of their values. And we have a view of the world that puts freedom and individual liberty, a belief in market outcomes, where appropriate, at the center of the activities of both our nations.

Mr. President, I'm very honored to be here. Janette and I have greatly enjoyed your hospitality. We wish you well. We respect very much the leadership that you, personally, and your administration brings to the affairs of the world. And we think the world is a safer, more optimistic place as a result of our joint efforts in Iraq, and we think that is a message which is resonating around the world. And we, too, have one aspiration for the Iraqi people, that they can live in freedom and they can run their own affairs, and they can benefit from the great civilization and the great resources which, unhindered, are at their disposal.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John.

We will answer a couple of questions, two per side. Barney, do you have a question? (Laughter.) He doesn't have one? Then we'll start with Patsy. Patsy is a fine Australian, and as you know. Tomorrow is her birthday. (Laughter.)

Go ahead and ask a soft question, now that I've set it up. (Laughter.)

Q Sir, in honor of your guest, I'll ask it in Australian, if that's all right. (Laughter.) Is there a possibility that you may never find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? And how would that square with your rationale for going to war?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes -- the question is about weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. The United States -- United Nations Security Council voted 1441, which made the declaration it had weapons of mass destruction. It's well-known it had weapons of mass destruction. And we've also got to recognize that he spent 14 years hiding weapons of mass destruction. I mean, he spent an entire decade making sure that inspectors would never find them. Iraq's the size of the state of California. It's got tunnels, caves, all kinds of complexes. We'll find them. And it's just going to be a matter of time to do so.

Q Mr. President, if I could ask, the Prime Minister has also said that Australian-American ties have never been stronger than at the moment. What impact will that have on Congress when it considers an FTA for Australia? And what sort of timeline are you thinking of for an FTA?

THE PRESIDENT: Right. Well, I appreciate you asking that. I'm firmly committed to an FTA with Australia. I am hopeful that the Congress feels the same way I feel.

We discussed the matter. I asked the Prime Minister, are we making, from the U.S. side, a strong enough effort to move the process along? Is Ambassador Zoellick doing what he's supposed to be doing, in terms of getting this trade agreement done? And the Prime Minister assured me that was the case. And so that made me feel good. The idea is to try to get this thing done by the end of the year, and then, of course, get it to our Congress in '04. It's -- I believe we can get it done, and I think it's an important -- will be an important step in our relationship.

PRIME MINISTER HOWARD: Amen to that.

Q Sir, you guys now have in custody 18 of the 55 most wanted --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes.

Q -- including several senior members, Tariq Aziz and others. What are you learning about where Saddam might be --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Right.

Q -- what his status is, or also about weapons?

PRESIDENT BUSH: The question is about -- we've captured 18 of the 55, I think you said. And we're still looking for Baghdad Bob, I want you to know. (Laughter.) Anyway -- what are we learning? Well, we're learning that, for example, that Tariq Aziz still doesn't know how to tell the truth. He didn't know how to tell the truth when he was in office. He doesn't know to tell the truth when he's been -- as a captive.

And the -- but we will find out a lot about the nature of the Hussein regime as time goes on because more and more people will come forward. It may not be the Aces, Kings, and Queens, and Jacks that do the talking. It may be those who were doing the -- carrying the water for the Aces, Kings, Queens, and Jacks that do the talking.

And we will learn a lot when the Iraqi people -- as the Iraqi people continue to come forth. And when we feel like sharing the information with you, we will. It's -- you'll probably learn it before I will in certain cases. But what we're going -- the world will find is, the man had a program to develop weapons of mass destruction, that he had terrorist connections, and that he was, by far, one of the most brutal dictators in the history of the world.

People in Australia and America can't imagine what -- when John and I say how brutal this guy is. This is a guy that cut the tongues out of dissidents and let them bleed in town squares. That's just -- that's beyond the imagination of the Australian people to think that could possibly happen. It happened. And more and more people will find out the nature of this regime as time goes on. I don't know whether the Aces will talk. I don't know whether the Kings will talk. But many Iraqi citizens will talk. And the more we learn, the more the world will find out about the true nature of the Iraqi regime.

Q President Bush, can you give us an idea of the sorts of things that you and the Prime Minister did at the ranch last night and this morning? And when do you plan to visit Australia?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, as soon as possible. I don't know what that means, though. So it's kind of what we -- that's called a "dodge." (Laughter.) I'd love to come to Australia.

We -- so I get out a coffee -- of course, got Laura some coffee first thing in the morning. And I look out my window and there's the Prime Minister ready to go for a stroll. So I hustled and got dressed, and we went for a good walk. And I'll tell you something, the guy -- I'm a pretty good athlete; he walks a good clip. I was breathing hard, and Barney was breathing harder. (Laughter.) We had trouble keeping up with him.

But one of my favorite things to do is to show this place to friends. And so, the Prime Minister and Mrs. Howard and Laura and I went -- traveled the ranch. And I took him to my favorite spot which is this canyon, and there's a waterfall. It rained a couple of days ago -- actually last night -- so the water was moving pretty good. And it's just a special part of the ranch.

We've got a lot of different variety of hardwood on this ranch. It's hard to tell it from this spot, but north of here, and -- there's a creek and intersection to a river, and there's some just fantastic trees in these bottoms. And John and I went and spent some time down there.

We visited a lot about our mutual interests. He's obviously very knowledgeable about a lot of the world. And we spent a lot of time talking about Indonesia and the threats that emanate out of Indonesia, and what the Australian government is doing to work with the Indonesian government to make Australian people -- and America, for that matter -- more secure.

We had a pretty good dinner last night -- a little beef. And, fortunately, the Prime Minister wanted to go to bed early -- because I did, too. (Laughter.) And we had a great visit. We'll go and have a lunch. One more tour of the ranch and have a lunch. The one thing I regret is he didn't go fishing with me yesterday afternoon. He wanted a little rest. But I love having him here.

I can't tell you what a comfort it is to talk to him on the phone. He's steady. You know, times get tough when you make tough decisions, and we both made a tough decision, but there was never any doubt in his mind. He was steady under fire. He stood his ground when he needed to stand his ground, because he understands the difference between right and wrong. And he knows the difference between slavery and

freedom. And I'm honored to call him friend, and really am glad he's here.

Thank you all very much. Hope you enjoy your stay in this part of the world. By the way, they tell me Australia and Texas, they've got a lot in common. Having to watch this man perform, I agree. (Laughter.) The biggest compliment you can pay to somebody, at least in this part of the world, is you're kind of like a Texan. (Laughter.) Thank you.

PRIME MINISTER HOWARD: Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Okay, Barney, come on. Quit showing off. (Laughter.)

END 11:40 A.M. CDT

 [Printer-Friendly Version](#)

[President](#) | [Vice President](#) | [First Lady](#) | [Mrs. Cheney](#) | [News & Policies](#) | [History & Tours](#) | [Kids](#) | [Your Government](#) | [Appointments](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Contact](#) | [Text only](#)

[Accessibility](#) | [Search](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#)