

Issues

- Hurricane Relief
- Homeland Security
- Judicial Nominations
- National Security
- Renewal in Iraq
- Jobs & Economy
- Social Security
- **More Issues »**

News

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

 RSS Feeds

News by Date

- November 2005
- October 2005
- September 2005
- August 2005
- July 2005
- June 2005
- May 2005
- April 2005
- March 2005
- February 2005
- January 2005
- December 2004
- November 2004
- October 2004
- September 2004
- August 2004
- July 2004
- June 2004
- May 2004
- April 2004
- March 2004
- February 2004
- January 2004
- December 2003
- November 2003
- October 2003
- September 2003
- August 2003
- July 2003
- June 2003
- May 2003
- April 2003
- March 2003
- February 2003
- January 2003
- December 2002
- November 2002

[Home](#) > [News & Policies](#) > [January 2005](#)

 [Printer-Friendly Version](#)
 [Email This Page](#)

For Immediate Release
 Office of the Press Secretary
 January 30, 2005

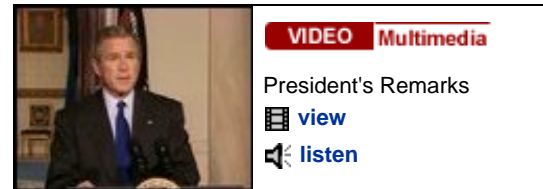
President Congratulates Iraqis on Election

The Cross Hall

 [In Focus: Iraqi Elections](#)

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1:00 P.M. EST



THE PRESIDENT: Today the people of Iraq have spoken to the world, and the world is hearing the voice of freedom from the center of the Middle East.

In great numbers, and under great risk, Iraqis have shown their commitment to democracy. By participating in free elections, the Iraqi people have firmly rejected the anti-democratic ideology of the terrorists. They have refused to be intimidated by thugs and assassins. And they have demonstrated the kind of courage that is always the foundation of self-government.

Some Iraqis were killed while exercising their rights as citizens. We also mourn the American and British military personnel who lost their lives today. Their sacrifices were made in a vital cause of freedom, peace in a troubled region, and a more secure future for us all.

The Iraqi people, themselves, made this election a resounding success. Brave patriots stepped forward as candidates. Many citizens volunteered as poll workers. More than 100,000 Iraqi security force personnel guarded polling places and conducted operations against terrorist groups. One news account told of a voter who had lost a leg in a terror attack last year, and went to the polls today, despite threats of violence. He said, "I would have crawled here if I had to. I don't want terrorists to kill other Iraqis like they tried to kill me. Today I am voting for peace."



Across Iraq today, men and women have taken rightful control of their country's destiny, and they have chosen a future of freedom and peace. In this process, Iraqis have had many friends at their side. The European Union and the United Nations gave important assistance in the election process. The American military and our diplomats, working with our coalition partners, have been skilled and relentless, and their sacrifices have helped to bring Iraqis to this day. The people of the United States have been patient and resolute, even in difficult days.

The commitment to a free Iraq now goes forward. This historic election begins the process of drafting and ratifying a new constitution, which will be the basis of a fully democratic Iraqi government. Terrorists and insurgents will continue to wage their war against democracy, and we will support the Iraqi people in their fight against them. We will continue training Iraqi security forces so this rising democracy can eventually take responsibility for its own security.

- [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](#)

There's more distance to travel on the road to democracy. Yet Iraqis are proving they're equal to the challenge. On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the people of Iraq on this great and historic achievement.

Thank you very much.

END 1:05 P.M. EST



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- [Nominations](#)
- [Application](#)



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- [Federal Statistics](#)

West Wing

- [History](#)

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