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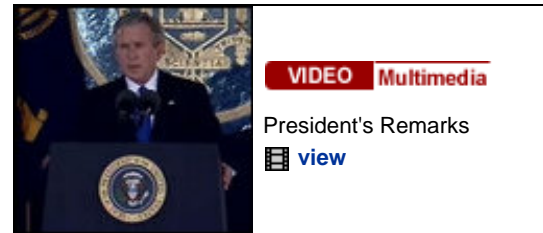
For Immediate Release
 Office of the Press Secretary
 May 27, 2005

President Discusses War on Terror at Naval Academy Commencement

Navy Marine Corps Memorial Stadium
 Annapolis, Maryland

10:12 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for the warm welcome. Secretary England, Admiral Clark, General Nyland, Vice Admiral Rempt, Captain Leidig, Dr. Miller, members of the Board of Visitors, Lieutenant Governor Steele and Congressman Hoyer, distinguished faculty, distinguished guests, proud parents, family, friends, and, most of all, graduating midshipmen of the Class of 2005, I'm honored to be here. (Applause.)



And I am proud to stand before the future leaders of the Navy and Marine Corps, and to celebrate the occasion, I thought I would bring along a small graduation gift. Too late to give you a "Staubach Day," -- so I'll do the next best thing: In keeping with long-standing tradition, I hereby absolve all midshipmen who are on restriction for minor conduct offenses. (Laughter and applause.) I leave it to Admiral Rempt to define exactly what "minor" means. (Laughter.)



You worked hard to get to this moment: You survived Plebe Summer, and having your parking tickets scraped. (Laughter.) You climbed Herndon Monument, and threw pennies at Tecumseh, god of the 2.0. I knew him pretty well when I was in school. (Laughter.) Now, at last, you've made it to graduation day, and in a few moments you will receive your military commissions and your diplomas. Your parents are proud of you, your teachers are proud of you, and so is your Commander-in-Chief. Congratulations on a great achievement. (Applause.)

A lot has changed since you arrived at Annapolis four years ago. Navy football went 0 and 10 in your plebe year. This year, you went 10 and 2, and you won your second Commander-in-Chief's trophy in a row. (Applause.) I'd like the record to show that your turnaround started the year after I delivered your commencement address. (Laughter.) So to ensure the continued dominance of Navy football, I thought I'd just swing by for a return visit.

When I spoke to the Class of 2001, none of us imagined that a few months later we would suffer a devastating surprise attack on our homeland, or that our nation would be plunged into a global war unlike any we had known before. Today, we face brutal and determined enemies -- men who celebrate murder, incite suicide, and thirst for absolute power. These enemies will not be stopped by negotiations, or concessions, or appeals to reason. In this war, there is only one option -- and that is victory. (Applause.)

Today, I'm going to talk about our strategy for victory in this war, what we've accomplished to make our nation more secure, your crucial role in this struggle, and why we need you to fight the war on terror and transform our military at the same time. In the 21st century, America will be prepared to answer any

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challenge, and defeat any adversary.

Our nation is pursuing a clear strategy for the war on terror: We're using every available tool to disrupt terrorists and their organizations. We are taking the fight to the enemy abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. (Applause.) We're denying the terrorists sanctuary, and making clear that America will not tolerate outlaw regimes that provide safe haven and support to terrorists. We're using all elements of national power to deny terrorists the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons they seek. We will not allow mass murderers to gain access to the tools of mass destruction. And we're stopping terrorists from achieving their ideological victories they seek, by working to spread the hope of freedom and reform across the broader Middle East. We understand that free nations do not support terrorists or invade their neighbors. We understand that to make the world more peaceful and our country more secure, we will advance the cause of liberty. (Applause.)

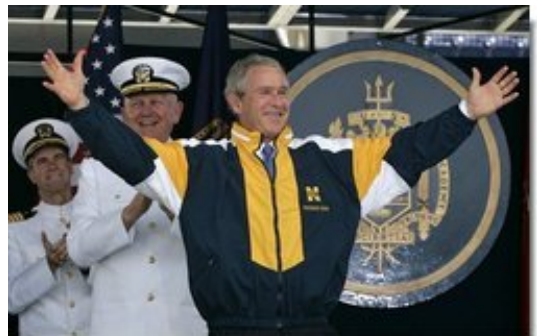
Thanks to the men and women of the United States military, our strategy is working -- we are winning the war on terror. Since September 11, 2001, we've removed brutal regimes in Kabul and Baghdad that supported and harbored terrorists. We helped launch Afghanistan and Iraq on the path to lasting freedom by liberating over 50 million people. (Applause.) Both these nations have now chosen their leaders in free elections, and their courage is inspiring democratic reformers across the broader Middle East to rise up and claim their liberty.



To stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction, we broke up the world's most dangerous nuclear trading network. We convinced Libya's leader to give up his country's chemical and nuclear weapons programs, as well as his long-range ballistic missiles. Two years ago, we launched the Proliferation Security Initiative, an effort supported by 60 nations to stop shipments of weapons of mass destruction on land, at sea, and in the air. We have gone after al Qaeda and other terrorists with relentless determination, disrupting their communications, planning, training, and financing. We have put the enemy on the run, and now they spend their days avoiding capture, because they know America's Armed Services are on their trail. (Applause.)

And we will stay on their trail. The best way to protect our citizens is to stay on the offensive. In the last few weeks, we've dealt the enemy a series of powerful blows. In Afghanistan, we brought to justice scores of terrorists and insurgents. In Pakistan, one of Osama Bin Laden's senior terrorist leaders, a man named al-Libbi, was brought to justice. In Iraq, we captured two senior operatives of the terrorist Zarqawi. And in recent days, our forces have killed or captured hundreds of terrorists and insurgents in Baghdad and Western Iraq and near the Syrian border. Across the world, our military is standing directly between the American people and the worst dangers in the world, and Americans are grateful to have such brave defenders. (Applause.)

Difficult and dangerous work remains. Suicide bombers in Iraq are targeting innocent men, women and children, hoping to intimidate Iraq's new leaders, and shake the will of the Iraqi people. They will fail. Iraqis are determined, and our strategy is clear: We will train Iraqi forces so they can take the fight to the enemy and defend their own country, and then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned. (Applause.)



The midshipmen I addressed here four years ago are now serving bravely in this struggle. The new officers who sat in the chairs where you now sit could not have known that their strength and character would be tested so soon. In the last four years, they've met every test, and overcome every challenge. And they are setting a lasting example of courage for the classes that follow.

Sitting in that crowd four years ago was Midshipman Edward Slavis. When I gave the order to liberate Iraq, he charged across the Kuwaiti border, leading a rifle platoon through 21 days of tough fighting into the heart of Baghdad. His battalion helped pull down the statue of Saddam Hussein. Ed says, "I will have time for myself later. Now I just feel privileged to spend my life doing something much larger than myself." He went

on to say, "The mission will be a success, and 20 or 30 years from now historians will look back on the mission to Iraq as America's golden moment." Ed Slavis is serving his country with courage, and he's adding to the history of this Academy.

Sitting in the crowd that day was Midshipman Josh Glover. He would soon risk his life in the city of Fallujah, fighting through a half-mile of enemy territory to rescue a platoon of Marines pinned down by insurgents. Josh says: "They had casualties and a Marine who had been killed. We were shooting 360 degrees." Josh and his men recovered that fallen Marine, and saved the platoon, and helped us win a critical battle in the war on terror.

Sitting in the crowd that day was a Midshipman whose name I cannot mention, because he went on to join the secret world of Navy special operations. He would soon deploy to Afghanistan with his Navy SEAL team, where he conducted lightning raids that captured dozens of Taliban and al Qaeda fighters. He even helped protect a very distinguished visitor to Afghanistan: the First Lady of the United States. (Applause.) And if he's out there listening, I've got a message for that courageous Navy Frogman: thanks for defending America, and thanks for taking such good care of my bride. (Applause.)

Also sitting in the crowd that day was Midshipman Bobby Rashad Jones. He would go on to serve as a deck division officer onboard the USS Germantown, ensuring the safe landing of Marines and Seabees in hostile territory, during anti-terrorist operations in the Philippines. Bobby was the "anchorman" of the Class of 2001. He was the one who gave me that bear hug. (Laughter.) Four years later, my ribs still hurt -- (laughter) -- so don't get any ideas. Here's what Bobby says: "Once I got to my ship after 9/11, it did not matter where I graduated. The expectations of Annapolis graduates never change -- and I am proud to be part of the elite and unique tradition of the United States Naval Academy." I want to thank Bobby for his service, and thank Bobby for witnessing your graduation today. (Applause.)



The members of the Class of 2001 have grown into experienced, battle-hardened Navy and Marine officers. They are serving our nation with valor and distinction, and soon you'll join them. Four years at this Academy have prepared you morally, mentally, and physically for the challenges ahead. And now the American people are depending on you to uphold the high ideals you learned here as midshipmen. I know that in the war on terror, the members of the Class of 2005 will "walk with honor," and you will make America proud. (Applause.)

In this time of unprecedented dangers, we need you to take on two difficult missions at once: We need you to defeat the terrorists who want to destroy what we stand for and how we live. And at the same time, we need you to transform our military for the 21st century, so we can deter and defeat the new adversaries who may threaten our people in the decades ahead.

The lesson of September 11th is clear: new dangers can arrive on our shores without warning. In this era of surprise, we cannot know for certain who might attack us, or where, or when. But we can anticipate how we might be attacked, and we can transform our capabilities to defend our citizens and deliver justice to our enemies.

To meet the threats of the 21st century, we are developing new technologies that will make our forces faster, lighter, more agile, and more lethal. In our time, terrible dangers can arise on a short moment anywhere in the world, and we must be prepared to oppose these dangers everywhere in the world.

Since taking office, my administration has invested \$16 billion to build transformational military capabilities. We've requested an additional \$78 billion for these efforts over the next four years. We've invested \$240 billion in research and development, so we can build even more advanced capabilities in the decades ahead. We requested \$275 billion for these efforts over the next four years. These investments will help us keep the peace by redefining war on our terms. And so long as I am your President, you will have the very best equipment and the resources you need to get the job done. (Applause.)



We've already seen the power of technology to transform our forces. In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, aircraft taking off from a carrier deck could engage about 200 targets per day. In Operation Iraqi Freedom, that number jumped to over 600 targets a day, three times the capability. And in each year, those capabilities are becoming more and more precise. In Iraq, we used a new hellfire missile for the first time, which can take out enemy fighters hiding on one floor of a building, without destroying the floors above and below. This missile is capable of reaching around corners to strike enemy forces that hide in caves, and bunkers and hardened multi-room complexes. In the coming years, there are going to be some awfully surprised terrorists when the thermobaric hellfire comes knocking. (Applause.)

Revolutionary advances in technology are transforming war in our favor. And in the decades ahead, the changes will be even more dramatic. We will deploy unmanned underwater vehicles that can go where no submarine can go today. We will deploy advanced destroyers capable of shooting down ballistic missiles, and transformed strike submarines that can silently carry special operation forces and cruise missiles within striking distance of our adversaries. We are developing joint sea bases that will allow our forces to strike from floating platforms close to the action, instead of being dependent on land bases far from the fight.

We're also harnessing advances in information technology, such as undersea surveillance systems, to provide our forces with near total battle space awareness. And technology is allowing us to improve the ability of the Navy and Army and Air Force and Marines to work together as a truly "joint" force -- with innovations like joint tactical radio that will allow all services to share information in the heat of battle. These technological advances will put unprecedented agility, speed, precision, and power in your hands, and you will use them to protect the American people in the dangerous decades ahead.

Technology changes the balance of war in another important way: We can now strike our enemies with greater effectiveness, at greater range, with fewer civilian casualties. In this new era of warfare, we can target a regime, not a nation, and that means terrorists and tyrants can no longer feel safe hiding behind innocent life. In the 21st century, we can target the guilty and protect the innocent, and that makes it easier to keep the peace. (Applause.)

To meet the threats of the 21st century, we must reposition our forces at home and abroad. Today, much of our military is still deployed in ways that reflect the threats of the 20th century. So last summer, I announced the biggest transformation of our global force posture since the end of the World War II. Over the coming decade, we will reposition our forces so they can surge quickly to deal with unexpected threats. We will deploy increased combat power across the world. And we will bring home between 60,000 to 70,000 uniformed personnel currently stationed overseas. (Applause.) These changes will reduce the stress on your families, raise the pressure on our enemies, and ensure that you remain the most powerful and effective fighting force on earth.

To meet new threats, we must transform our domestic force posture as well, and that will require closing and realigning military bases. The military services have each done a review of their requirements, and they have concluded that we have more bases than we need. Supporting these facilities wastes billions of taxpayer dollars, money that can be better spent on giving you the tools to fight terrorists and confront 21st-century threats. Two weeks ago, the Defense Department presented the military's recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. This is only the beginning of the process. Commission members will now visit all the sites that the military has recommended for closure, and communities will have the opportunity to make their case directly to the Commission.

I know first-hand how hard base closings can be on local communities. I was Governor of Texas during the last round of base closures, when facilities were shut down in places like Lubbock and Laredo and Austin. We'll do everything possible to help affected communities make the transition as smoothly as possible, by providing economic development aid, job training, and assistance with redevelopment plans for affected bases. This process will be impartial and fair, and it will produce a net savings of \$48 billion over the next 20 years. It will result in a military that is more efficient and better prepared, so you can better protect the American people against the dangers of this new century.

Transformation requires more than high-tech weapons -- it requires creativity, ingenuity, and a willingness to try new things. All the advanced technology in the world will not transform our military if we do not transform our thinking.

Sometimes, transformation means using old capabilities in new ways. In Afghanistan our troops rode into battle on horseback -- but they did it while using GPS and advanced satellite communications to call in air strikes on enemy positions. They combined a staple of 19th century warfare with the most advanced 21st century technology, and they helped remove a dangerous threat to America.

As you begin your military careers, we need you to bring that same spirit of creativity and innovation to your work. Seek out the innovative leaders in our military, work with them and learn from them, and they will help you to become leaders yourselves. Show courage, and not just on the battlefield. Pursue the possibilities others tell you do not exist.

This advice comes with a warning: If you challenge established ways of thinking, you will face opposition. Believe me, I know, I've lived in Washington for four years. The opponents of change are many, and its champions are few, but the champions of change are the ones who make history. Be champions, and you will make America safer for your children and your grandchildren, and you'll add to the character of our nation.

And as you begin your military careers, proceed with confidence, because our citizens are determined, our country is strong, and the future belongs to freedom. Across the world, liberty is on the march. In the last 18 months, we have witnessed a Rose Revolution in Georgia, an Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, a Purple Revolution in Iraq, a Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and a Cedar Revolution in Lebanon -- and these are only the beginning. (Applause.) Across Central Asia and the broader Middle East, we are seeing the rise of a new generation whose hearts burn for liberty, and they are going to have it. America is standing with these democratic reformers because we know that the only force powerful enough to stop the rise of tyranny and terror, and replace hatred with hope, is the force of human freedom. And by extending freedom to millions who have not known it, we will advance the cause of peace and make America more secure. (Applause.)

Some of our men and women in uniform have given their lives in this cause, and others have returned home with terrible injuries. America honors their sacrifice, and we will uphold the cause they served. You are the ones who will take up their mantle, and carry on their fight, and ensure the triumph of liberty in the century ahead.

You are now part of the greatest force for freedom in the history of the world -- the Armed Forces of the United States. In the years ahead, you will see dramatic changes taking place all around you. Yet amid all the tumult and change, there is one thing that won't change -- and that is character of our men and women who wear the uniform. This is your generation's moment. Your mission is necessary and it is noble. The weapons you use will be more powerful and precise than those available to Annapolis graduates who came before you, and you will face enemies they never imagined. But what will make your success possible is the same thing that made their success possible: the courage and honor and personal integrity that you learned at this Academy.

We're going to give you the tools you'll need to prevail in today's war on terror, and the capabilities you'll need to protect us against the dangers that may yet emerge. Now the task is in your hands, and that means it is in the best of hands. Thank you for your courageous decision to serve. Bring honor to the uniform, security to our country, and peace to the world. And congratulations to every member of the class of 2005.

May God bless you. (Applause.)

END 10:42 A.M. EDT

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