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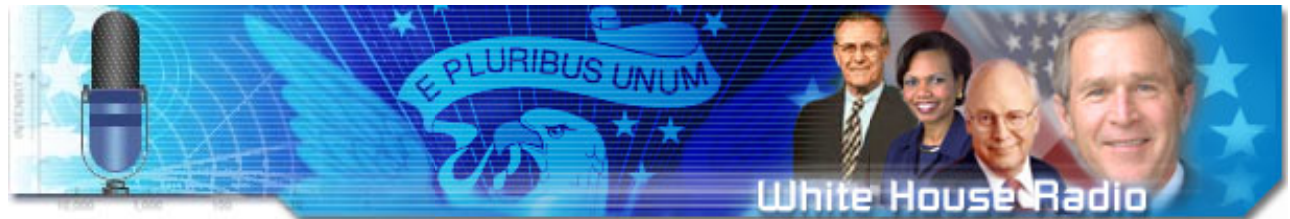
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For Immediate Release
August 27, 2005

President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. In recent days, we have witnessed remarkable events in the broader Middle East. People are making the tough choices necessary for a future of security and hope that will make the region and the world more peaceful.

During the past two weeks, Prime Minister Sharon and the Israeli people took a courageous and painful step by removing Israeli settlements in Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank. I congratulate the Prime Minister for his bold leadership.

Now that Israel has withdrawn, the way forward is clear. The Palestinians must show the world that they will fight terrorism and govern in a peaceful way. We will continue to help the Palestinians to prepare for self government and to defeat the terrorists who attack Israel and oppose the establishment of a peaceful Palestinian state.

We remain fully committed to defending the security and well-being of our friend and ally Israel. We demand an end to terrorism and violence in every form because we know that progress depends on ending terror. And we will continue working for the day when the map of the Middle East shows two democratic states -- Israel and Palestine -- living side by side in peace and security.

As these hopeful events occur in the Holy Land, the people of Iraq are also making the tough choices and compromises necessary for a free and peaceful future. In January, eight-and-a-half million Iraqis defied the terrorists and went to the polls to vote. Iraq's main ethnic and religious groups made the courageous choice to join the political process. And together, they have worked toward a democratic constitution that respects the traditions of their country and guarantees the rights of all their citizens.

Like our own nation's founders over two centuries ago, the Iraqis are grappling with difficult issues, such as the role of the federal government. What is important is that Iraqis are now addressing these issues through debate and discussion -- not at the barrel of a gun. The establishment of a democratic constitution in Iraq, just like the establishment of a constitution in Afghanistan last year, will be a landmark event in the history of the broader Middle East. And it will bring us closer to the day when the nation of Iraq can govern itself,



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sustain itself, and defend itself.

The terrorists are trying to stop the rise of democracy in Iraq because they know a free Iraq will deal a decisive blow to their strategy to dominate the Middle East. But the Iraqi people are determined to build a free future for their nation, and they are uniting against the terrorists.

We saw that unity earlier this month when followers of the terrorist Zarqawi tried to force Shiite Muslims to leave the Iraqi city of Ramadi. Sunni Muslims in that city came to the defense of their Shiite neighbors. As one Sunni leader put it, "We have had enough of Zarqawi's nonsense. We don't accept that a non-Iraqi should try to enforce his control over Iraqis."

By choosing to stand with their fellow Iraqis, these Sunnis rejected the terrorists' attempt to divide their nation and incite sectarian violence.

Iraqis are working together to build a free nation that contributes to peace and stability in the region, and we will help them succeed. American and Iraqi forces are on the hunt side by side to defeat the terrorists. As we hunt down our common enemies, we will continue to train more Iraqi security forces.

Our strategy is straightforward: As Iraqis stand up, Americans will stand down. And when Iraqi forces can defend their freedom by taking more and more of the fight to the enemy, our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

Our efforts in Iraq and the broader Middle East will require more time, more sacrifice and continued resolve. Yet people across the Middle East are choosing a future of freedom and prosperity and hope. And as they take these brave steps, Americans will continue to stand with them because we know that free and democratic nations are peaceful nations. By advancing the cause of liberty in the Middle East, we will bring hope to millions and security to our own citizens. And we will lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

Thank you for listening.

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