



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

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President Bush Discusses Freedom Agenda

Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center
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 [In Focus: Freedom Agenda](#)

 [Video \(Windows\)](#)

 [Presidential Remarks](#)

 [Audio](#)

 [Photos](#)

 [En Español](#)

10:26 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Please be seated. Henrietta, thank you for the kind introduction. I am honored to join you all today to express America's solidarity with those who yearn for liberty around the world.

Captive Nations Week was first observed in 1959, at a time when Soviet Communism seemed ascendant. Few people at that first gathering could have envisioned then what the -- that the Cold War would end the way it did -- with the triumph of the shipyard workers in Poland, a Velvet Revolution in Prague, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union. Captive Nations Week is a chance for us to reflect on that remarkable history, and to honor the brave dissidents and democracy activists who helped secure freedom's victory in the great ideological struggle of the 20th century.

Captive Nation Week is also a chance to reflect on the challenges we face in the 21st century -- the challenge of the new ideological struggle against violent extremism. In this struggle, we can go forward with confidence -- free nations have faced determined enemies before and have prevailed, and we will prevail again.

I appreciate your leadership of USAID, Henrietta; and I want to thank all those who work for this very important Agency. I appreciate you being on the front lines of compassion and decency and liberty.



I'm honored to be here with the Secretary of Commerce, Carlos Gutierrez. The Cuban dissidents have no better friend than Carlos Gutierrez. Think about America -- Carlos was raised, born in Cuba. Today he sits in the Cabinet of the President of the United States. I love what our country represents. And Carlos, I thank you for serving.

I'm proud to be here with Ambassador John Negroponte. He's the Deputy Secretary of the Department of State. Deputy Secretary of Defense, Gordon England, is with us. Ambassador Mark Dybul, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. Thanks for coming, Mark. Other members of the administration -- a lot of members from the Diplomatic Corps. Thank you for coming. I'm proud to be in your presence.

I believe America is the hope for the world because we are a nation that stands strongly for freedom. We believe every man, woman, and child is given the gift of liberty by our Creator. That's a fundamental belief of the United States. This cherished belief has guided our leaders from America's earliest days.

We see this belief in George Washington's assertion that freedom's cause, as he put it, the cause is "the cause of mankind."

We see it in Lincoln's summoning of "the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere."

We see it in Wilson's pledge to make the world "safe for democracy" in World War I, and FDR's determination to make America "the arsenal of democracy" in World War II.

We see it in Kennedy's promise to "pay any price to assure the survival and success of liberty," and Ronald Reagan's call to "move toward a world in which all people are at last free to determine their own destiny."

Over the years, different Presidents, from different eras, and different political parties, have acted to defend and advance the cause of liberty. These actions included bold policies such as the Lend-Lease Act, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, the creation of NATO and the Voice of America, support for freedom fighters in Central America, and the liberation of Grenada and Panama. And because we were steadfast in liberty's defense, the cause of freedom prevailed.

At the dawn of a new century, our belief in the universality of freedom is being challenged once again. We saw the challenge on September the 11th, 2001. On that day terrorists, harbored by a tyrannical regime thousands of miles from America, brought death and destruction to our shores. We learned important lessons: To protect America, we must fight the enemy abroad so we don't have to face them here at home. And to protect America, we must defeat the ideology of hatred by spreading the hope of freedom.

Over the past seven years, this is exactly what we have done. Since 9/11, we recognized that we're at war and we must stop new attacks before they happen -- not wait until after they happen. So we're



giving our intelligence and law enforcement and homeland security professionals the tools they need to stop terrorists before they strike again. We're transforming our military to meet the threats of a new century. We're putting pressure on the enemy. We've captured or killed thousands of terrorists -- including most of those responsible for the September the 11th attacks. We've removed regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq that threatened our citizens and the peace in the world. And now we're helping the people of those two nations fight the terrorists who want to establish new safe havens from which to launch attacks on America and our friends.

In the long run, though, the best way to defeat the terrorists is to offer a hopeful alternative to their murderous ideology -- and that alternative is based on human liberty. We've seen a hopeful beginning for the cause of liberty at the start of the 21st century. Over the last seven years, we've seen the citizens in Afghanistan and Iraq emerge from tyranny to establish representative governments. We've seen citizens in Georgia and Ukraine stand up for their right to free and fair elections. We've seen people in Lebanon take to the streets to demand their independence. We've seen strides toward democracy taken by nations such as Kuwait and Liberia, Mauritania and Morocco, and Pakistan.

It's in our national interest to continue liberty's advance -- because we know from history that the advance of freedom is necessary for our security and for world peace. Just think about World War II. During that conflict Japan and Germany were enemies of America who invaded their neighbors and destabilized the world. And today, Japan and Germany are strong democracies and good friends and strong allies in the cause of peace.

During the Cold War, the nations of Central and Eastern Europe were part of the Warsaw Pact alliance that was poised to attack Western Europe. Today, most of those nations are members of the NATO alliance, who are using their freedom to aid the rise of other young democracies. In these experiences, we have seen the transformative power of freedom. We've seen that free societies don't harbor terrorists, or launch unprovoked attacks on their neighbors. Free societies are peaceful societies. And that is why the United States of America must continue to cause -- to lead the cause of freedom.

Over the past seven years, we've learned that leading the cause of freedom requires combating hopelessness in struggling nations. Combating hopelessness is in America's security interests, because the only way our enemies can recruit people to their dark ideology is to exploit distress and despair. Combating hopelessness is in our moral interests -- Americans believe that to whom much is given, much is required. So the challenge for America in the years ahead is to continue to help people in struggling nations achieve freedom from corruption, freedom from disease, freedom from poverty, freedom from hunger and freedom from tyranny.

In the years ahead America must continue to use our foreign assistance to promote democracy and good government. Increased aid alone will not help nations overcome institutional challenges that hold entire societies back. To be effective, our aid must be targeted to encourage the development of free and accountable institutions.

In the past seven years we've more than doubled the federal budget for democracy and governance and human rights programs. We've increased the budget for the National Endowment of Democracy by more than 150 percent since 2001. We've transformed the way we deliver aid by creating the

Millennium Challenge Account, which is a new approach to foreign assistance, which offers support to developing nations that fight corruption, and govern justly, and open their economies, and invest in the health and education of their people. The challenge for future presidents and future Congresses will be to ensure that America's generosity remains tied to the promotion of transparency and accountability and prosperity.

In the years ahead, America must continue to promote free trade and open investment. Over the long term, trade and investment are the best ways to fight poverty and build strong and prosperous societies. Over the past seven years, we expanded the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which is spreading prosperity by dramatically increasing trade between the United States and Africa; implemented free trade agreements with 11 countries, creating hope and opportunity for both our citizens and the citizens of these nations. We're striving to make this the year that the world completes an ambitious Doha trade agreement -- will open up new markets for Americans' goods and services and help alleviate poverty around the world. The challenge for future presidents and future Congresses is to reject the false temptation of protectionism and keep the world open for trade.

In the years ahead, America must continue to fight against disease. Nations afflicted with debilitating public health crises cannot build strong and prosperous societies for their citizens. America is helping these nations replace disease and despair with healing and hope. We're working in 15 African nations to cut the number of malaria-related deaths in half. Our Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, known as PEPFAR, is supporting the treatment of more than 1.7 million people. And Congress will soon pass legislation to significantly expand this vital initiative. We're expanding our efforts to train health workers for the poorest countries, to treat key neglected tropical diseases such as river blindness and hookworm. The challenge for future presidents and future Congresses will be to continue this commitment, so that we can lift the shadow of malaria and HIV/AIDS and other diseases once and for all.

In the years ahead, America must continue to lead the fight against global hunger. Nobel Prize winner Norman Borlaug once said: "You can't build peace on empty stomachs." Americans are answering the call to feed the hungry. This year, the United States has provided more than \$1.8 billion in new funds to bolster global food security. We're the world's largest provider of food aid. I strongly believe we must transform the way that our food aid is delivered. One innovative proposal is to purchase up to 25 percent of our food assistance directly from farmers in developing world. This would help build up local agriculture; it will help break the cycle of famine. And I ask the United States Congress to approve this measure as soon as possible. The challenge for future presidents and future Congresses will be to find still other innovative ways to alleviate hunger while promoting greater self-reliance in developing nations.

In the years ahead, America must continue to lead the cause of human rights. The Soviet dissident Andrei Amalrik once compared a tyrannical state to a soldier who holds a rifle on his enemy, until his arms finally tire and the prisoner escapes. It's important we never strengthen the arms. The role of free nations like ours is to put pressure on the arms of the world's tyrants and strengthen the prisoners who are striving for their liberty.

Over the past seven years, we've spoken out against human rights abuses by tyrannical regimes like those in Iran, Sudan, and Syria and Zimbabwe. We've spoken candidly about human rights with

nations with whom we've got good relations, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia and China. In keeping with this commitment, today I renew my call for the release of all prisoners of conscience around the world -- including Ayman Nour of Egypt, Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, Oscar Biscet of Cuba, Riad Seif of Syria.

To ensure our government continues to speak out for those who have no other voice, I recently issued a directive instructing all senior U.S. officials serving in undemocratic countries to maintain regular contact with political dissidents and democracy activists. The challenge for future presidents and future Congresses is to ensure that America always stands with those seeking freedom -- and never hesitates to shine the light of conscience on abuses of human rights across the world.

As Henrietta mentioned, with us today are individuals who suffered terribly in the cause of freedom, and whose stories inspire our country, and their examples of resilience and resolve should give us courage. I'm not going to mention all the ones I met, but I'd like to make -- mention some.

First, we stand with Blanca Gonzalez. Her son, Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, remains in Castro's gulag for speaking the truth about the Cuban regime. Bienvenidos. (Applause.)

We stand with Olga Kozulina. Her father, Alexander Kozulin, remains in prison in Belarus for the "crime" of running for President. Welcome. (Applause.)

We stand with Manouchehr Mohammadi. Both he and his brother were viciously tortured by the Iranian authorities. He was the only one who survived and escaped. Welcome to America. (Applause.)

We stand with Cho Jin Hae, who witnessed several of her family members starve to death in North Korea. She herself was tortured by the communist authorities. (Applause.)

Thank you all for coming. I thank the others who took time out of their day to meet me, as well. I appreciate your testament to the universal desire for freedom.

This morning, I have a message for all those throughout the world who languish in tyranny: I know there are moments when it feels like you're alone in your struggle. And you're not alone. America hears you. Millions of our citizens stand with you, and hope still lives -- even in bleak places and in dark moments.

Even now, change is stirring in places like Havana and Damascus and Tehran. The people of these nations dream of a free future, hope for a free future, and believe that a free future will come. And it will. May God be with them in their struggle. America always will be.

Thank you for letting me come by, and may God bless you all. (Applause.)

END 10:44 A.M. EDT

Return to this article at:

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