



The White House

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



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For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
February 21, 2005

Remarks by the President at Concert Noble

Concert Noble
Brussels, Belgium

2:08 P.M. (Local)

THE PRESIDENT: Guy, or Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your kind introduction and thank you for your warm hospitality. Distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen. Laura and I are really glad to be back. I'm really pleased to visit Brussels again, the capital of a beautiful nation, the seat of the European Union and the NATO Alliance. The United States and Belgium are close allies, and we will always be warm friends.

You know, on this journey to Europe I follow in some large footsteps. More than two centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin arrived on this continent to great acclaim. An observer wrote, "His reputation was more universal than Leibnitz or Newton, Frederick or Voltaire, and his character more beloved and esteemed than any or all of them." The observer went on to say, "There was scarcely a peasant or a citizen who did not consider him as a friend to human kind." I have been hoping for a similar reception -- (laughter) -- but Secretary Rice told me I should be a realist. (Laughter.)

I appreciate the opportunity, in this great hall, to speak to the peoples of Europe. For more than 60 years, our nations stood together to face great challenges of history. Together, we opposed totalitarian ideologies with our might and with our patience. Together, we united this continent with our democratic values. And together we mark, year by year, the anniversaries of freedom -- from D-Day, to the liberation of death camps, to the victories of conscience in 1989. Our transatlantic alliance frustrated the plans of dictators, served the highest ideals of humanity, and set a violent century on a new and better course. And as time goes by, we must never forget our shared achievements.

Yet, our relationship is founded on more than nostalgia. In a new century, the alliance of Europe and North America is the main pillar of our security. Our robust trade is one of the engines of the world's economy. Our example of economic and political freedom gives hope to millions who are weary of poverty and oppression. In all these ways, our strong friendship is essential to peace and prosperity across the globe -- and no temporary debate, no passing disagreement of governments, no power on earth will ever divide us. (Applause.)

Today, America and Europe face a moment of consequence and opportunity. Together we can once again set history on a hopeful course -- away from poverty and despair, and toward development and the dignity of self-rule; away from resentment and violence, and toward justice and the peaceful settlement of differences. Seizing this moment requires idealism: We must see in every person the right and the capacity to live in freedom. Seizing this moment requires realism: We must act wisely and deliberately in the face of complex challenges. And seizing this moment also requires cooperation, because when Europe and America stand together, no problem can stand against us. As past debates fade, as great duties become clear, let us begin a new era of transatlantic unity.

Our greatest opportunity and immediate goal is peace in the Middle East. After many false starts, and dashed hopes, and stolen lives, a settlement of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is now within reach. America and Europe have made a moral commitment: We will not stand by as another generation in

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the Holy Land grows up in an atmosphere of violence and hopelessness. America and Europe also share a strategic interest: By helping to build a lasting peace, we will remove an unsettled grievance that is used to stir hatred and violence across the Middle East.

Our efforts are guided by a clear vision: We're determined to see two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. (Applause.) The Palestinian people deserve a government that is representative, honest and peaceful. The people of Israel need an end to terror and a reliable, steadfast partner for peace. And the world must not rest until there is a just and lasting resolution of this conflict.

All the parties have responsibilities to meet. Arab states must end incitement in their own media, cut off public and private funding for terrorism, stop their support for extremist education, and establish normal relations with Israel. Palestinian leaders must confront and dismantle terrorist groups, fight corruption, encourage free enterprise, and rest true authority with the people. Only a democracy can serve the hopes of Palestinians, and make Israel secure, and raise the flag of a free Palestine. A successful Palestinian democracy should be Israel's top goal as well. So Israel must freeze settlement activity, help Palestinians build a thriving economy, and ensure that a new Palestinian state is truly viable, with contiguous territory on the West Bank. A state of scattered territories will not work. (Applause.) As Palestinian leaders assume responsibility for Gaza and increasingly larger territory, we will help them build the economic and political and security institutions needed to govern effectively.

These vital steps are also difficult steps, because progress requires new trust, and because terrorists will do all they can to destroy that trust. Yet we are moving forward in practical ways. Next month in London, Prime Minister Blair will host a conference to help the Palestinian people build the democratic institutions of their state. President Abbas has the opportunity to put forward a strategy of reform, which can and will gain financial support from the international community -- including financial support. I hope he will seize the moment. I have asked Secretary Rice to attend the conference, and to convey America's strong support for the Palestinian people as they build a democratic state. And I appreciate the prominent role that Prime Minister Blair and other European leaders are playing in the cause of peace.

We seek peace between Israel and Palestine for its own sake. We also know that a free and peaceful Palestine can add to the momentum of reform throughout the broader Middle East. In the long run, we cannot live in peace and safety if the Middle East continues to produce ideologies of murder, and terrorists who seek the deadliest weapons. Regimes that terrorize their own people will not hesitate to support terror abroad. A status quo of tyranny and hopelessness in the Middle East -- the false stability of dictatorship and stagnation -- can only lead to deeper resentment in a troubled region, and further tragedy in free nations. The future of our nations, and the future of the Middle East, are linked -- and our peace depends on their hope and development and freedom.

Lasting, successful reform in the broader Middle East will not be imposed from the outside; it must be chosen from within. Governments must choose to fight corruption, abandon old habits of control, protect the rights of conscience and the rights of minorities. Governments must invest in the health and education of their people, and take responsibility for solving problems instead of simply blaming others. Citizens must choose to hold their governments accountable. The path isn't always easy, as any free people can testify -- yet there's reason for confidence. Ultimately, men and women who seek the success of their nation will reject an ideology of oppression, anger, and fear. Ultimately, men and women will embrace participation and progress -- and we are seeing the evidence in an arc of reform from Morocco to Bahrain to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our challenge is to encourage this progress by taking up the duties of great democracies. We must be on the side of democratic reformers, we must encourage democratic movements, and support democratic transitions in practical ways.

Europe and America should not expect or demand that reforms come all at once -- that didn't happen in our own histories. My country took many years to include minorities and women in the full promise of America -- and that struggle hasn't ended. Yet, while our expectations must be realistic, our ideals must be firm and they must be clear. We must expect higher standards from our friends and partners in the Middle East. The government of Saudi Arabia can demonstrate its leadership in the region by expanding the role of its people in determining their future. And the great and proud nation of Egypt, which showed the way toward peace in

the Middle East, can now show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.

Our shared commitment to democratic progress is being tested in Lebanon -- a once-thriving country that now suffers under the influence of an oppressive neighbor. Just as the Syrian regime must take stronger action to stop those who support violence and subversion in Iraq, and must end its support for terrorist groups seeking to destroy the hope of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, Syria must also end its occupation of Lebanon. (Applause.)

The Lebanese people have the right to be free, and the United States and Europe share an interest in a democratic, independent Lebanon. My nation and France worked to pass Security Council Resolution 1559, which demands that Lebanon's sovereignty be respected, that foreign troops and agents be withdrawn, and that free elections be conducted without foreign interference. In the last several months, the world has seen men and women voting in historic elections, from Kabul to Ramallah to Baghdad -- and without Syrian interference, Lebanon's parliamentary elections in the spring can be another milestone of liberty.

Our commitment to democratic progress is being honored in Afghanistan. That country is building a democracy that reflects Afghan traditions and history, and shows the way for other nations in the region. The elected president is working to disarm and demobilize militias in preparation for the National Assembly elections to be held this spring. And the Afghan people know the world is with them. After all, Germany is providing vital police training. The UK is helping to fight drug trade. Italy is giving assistance on judicial reform. NATO's growing security mission is commanded by a Turkish General. European governments are helping Afghanistan to succeed -- and America appreciates your leadership.

Together, we must make clear to the Iraqi people that the world is also with them -- because they have certainly shown their character to the world. An Iraqi man who lost a leg in a car bombing last year made sure he was there to vote on January the 30th. 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." Every vote cast in Iraq was an act of defiance against terror, and the Iraqi people have earned our respect. (Applause.)

Some European nations joined the fight to liberate Iraq, while others did not. Yet all of us recognize courage when we see it -- and we saw it in the Iraqi people. And all nations now have an interest in the success of a free and democratic Iraq, which will fight terror, which will be a beacon of freedom, and which will be a source of true stability in the region. In the coming months, Iraq's newly elected assembly will carry out the important work of establishing a government, providing security, enhancing basic services, and writing a democratic constitution. Now is the time for established democracies to give tangible political, economic and security assistance to the world's newest democracy.

In Iran, the free world shares a common goal: For the sake of peace, the Iranian regime must end its support for terrorism, and must not develop nuclear weapons. (Applause.) In safeguarding the security of free nations, no option can be taken permanently off the table. Iran, however, is different from Iraq. We're in the early stages of diplomacy. The United States is a member of the IAEA Board of Governors, which has taken the lead on this issue. We're working closely with Britain, France and Germany as they oppose Iran's nuclear ambitions, and as they insist that Tehran comply with international law. The results of this approach now depend largely on Iran. We also look for Iran to finally deliver on promised reform. The time has arrived for the Iranian regime to listen to the Iranian people, and respect their rights, and join in the movement toward liberty that is taking place all around them.

Across the Middle East -- from the Palestinian Territories, to Lebanon, to Iraq, to Iran -- I believe that the advance of freedom within nations will build the peace among nations. And one reason for this belief is the experience of Europe. In two world wars, Europe saw the aggressive nature of tyranny, and the terrible cost of mistrust and division. In the Cold War, Europe saw the so-called stability of Yalta was a constant source of injustice and fear. And Europe also saw how the rise of democratic movements like Solidarity could part an Iron Curtain drawn by tyrants. The spread of freedom has helped to resolve old disputes, and the enlargement of NATO and the European Union have made partners out of former rivals. America supports Europe's democratic unity for the same reason we support the spread of democracy in the Middle East -- because freedom leads to peace. And America supports a strong Europe because we need a strong partner in the hard work of advancing freedom in the world. (Applause.)

European leaders demonstrated this vision in Ukraine. Presidents Kwasniewski of Poland and Adamkus of

Lithuania, Javier Solana of the EU, helped to resolve the election crisis and bring Ukraine back into the camp of freedom. As a free government takes hold in that country, and as the government of President Yushchenko pursues vital reforms, Ukraine should be welcomed by the Euro-Atlantic family. We must support new democracies, and so members of our alliance must continue to reach out to Georgia, where last year peaceful protests overturned a stolen election, and unleashed the forces of democratic change.

I also believe that Russia's future lies within the family of Europe and the transatlantic community. America supports WTO membership for Russia, because meeting WTO standards will strengthen the gains of freedom and prosperity in that country. Yet, for Russia to make progress as a European nation, the Russian government must renew a commitment to democracy and the rule of law. We recognize that reform will not happen overnight. We must always remind Russia, however, that our alliance stands for a free press, a vital opposition, the sharing of power, and the rule of law -- and the United States and all European countries should place democratic reform at the heart of their dialogue with Russia. (Applause.)

As we seek freedom in other nations, we must also work to renew the values that make freedom possible. As I said in my Inaugural Address, we cannot carry the message of freedom and the baggage of bigotry at the same time. We must reject anti-Semitism from any source, and we must condemn violence such as we have witnessed in the Netherlands. All our nations must work to integrate minorities into the mainstream of society, and to teach the value of tolerance to each new generation.

The nations in our great alliance have many advantages and blessings. We also have a call beyond our comfort: We must raise our sights to the wider world. Our ideals and our interests lead in the same direction: By bringing progress and hope to nations in need, we can improve many lives, and lift up failing states, and remove the causes and sanctuaries of terror.

Our alliance is determined to promote development, and integrate developing nations into the world economy. And the measure of our success must be the results we achieve, not merely the resources we spend. Together, we created the Monterrey Consensus, which links new aid from developed nations to real reform in developing ones. This strategy is working. Throughout the developing world, governments are confronting corruption, the rule of law is taking root, and people are enjoying new freedoms. Developed nations have responded by increasing assistance by a third. Through the Millennium Challenge Account, my nation is increasing our aid to developing nations that govern justly, expand economic freedom, and invest in the education and health of their people. While still providing humanitarian assistance and support, developed nations are taking a wiser approach to other aid. Instead of subsidizing failure year after year, we must reward progress and improve lives.

Our alliance is determined to encourage commerce among nations, because open markets create jobs, and lift income, and draw whole nations into an expanding circle of freedom and opportunity. Europe and America will continue to increase trade, as we do so, we'll resolve our trade disagreements in a cooperative spirit -- and we should share the benefits of fair and free trade with others. That's why we'll continue to advance the Doha Development Agenda, and bring global trade talks to a successful conclusion. We should all pursue fiscal policies in our nations -- sound fiscal policies of low taxes and fiscal restraint and reform that promote a stable world financial system and foster economic growth.

Our alliance is determined to show good stewardship of the earth -- and that requires addressing the serious, long-term challenge of global climate change. All of us expressed our views on the Kyoto protocol -- and now we must work together on the way forward. Emerging technologies such as hydrogen-powered vehicles, electricity from renewable energy sources, clean coal technology, will encourage economic growth that is environmentally responsible. By researching, by developing, by promoting new technologies across the world, all nations, including the developing countries can advance economically, while slowing the growth in global greenhouse and avoid pollutants that undermines public health. All of us can use the power of human ingenuity to improve the environment for generations to come.

Our alliance is determined to meet natural disaster, famine, and disease with swift and compassionate help. As we meet today, American and European personnel are aiding the victims of the tsunami in Asia. Our combined financial commitment to tsunami relief and reconstruction is nearly \$4 billion. We're working through the Global Fund to combat AIDS and other diseases across the world. And America's Emergency Plan has focused additional resources on nations where the needs are greatest. Through all these efforts, we encourage stability and progress, build a firmer basis for democratic institutions -- and, above all, we

fulfill a moral duty to heal the sick, and feed the hungry, and comfort the afflicted.

Our alliance is also determined to defend our security -- because we refuse to live in a world dominated by fear. Terrorist movements seek to intimidate free peoples and reverse the course of history by committing dramatic acts of murder. We will not be intimidated, and the terrorists will not stop the march of freedom. I thank the nations of Europe for your strong cooperation in the war on terror. Together, we have disrupted terrorist financing, strengthened intelligence sharing, enhanced our law enforcement cooperation, and improved the security of international commerce and travel.

We're pursuing terrorists wherever they hide. German authorities recently arrested two terrorists plotting to attack American interests in Iraq. Both will be prosecuted under new German laws, enacted after the September the 11th. Just last week, the United Nations added Muhsin al-Fadhli to its al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee list. This man is a known al Qaeda operative and Zarqawi associate, provided support to the terrorists who conducted the 2002 bombing of a French oil tanker. Working together, America, France and other nations will bring him to justice. For the sake of the security of our people, for the sake of peace, we will be relentless in chasing down the ideologues of hate.

On September the 11th, America turned first to our immediate security, and to the pursuit of an enemy -- and that vital work goes on. We also found that a narrow definition of security is not enough. While confronting a present threat, we have accepted the long-term challenge of spreading hope and liberty and prosperity as the great alternatives to terror. As we defeat the agents of terror, we will also remove the sources of terror.

This strategy is not American strategy, or European strategy, or Western strategy. Spreading liberty for the sake of peace is the cause of all mankind. This approach not only reduces a danger to free peoples; it honors the dignity of all peoples, by placing human rights and human freedom at the center of our agenda. And our alliance has the ability, and the duty, to tip the balance of history in favor of freedom.

We know there are many obstacles, and we know the road is long. Albert Camus said that, "Freedom is a long-distance race." We're in that race for the duration -- and there is reason for optimism. Oppression is not the wave of the future; it is the desperate tactic of a few backward-looking men. Democratic nations grow in strength because they reward and respect the creative gifts of their people. And freedom is the direction of history, because freedom is the permanent hope of humanity.

America holds these values because of ideals long held on this continent. We proudly stand in the tradition of the Magna Carta, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the North Atlantic Treaty. The signers of that Treaty pledged "To safeguard the freedom, common heritage, and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law." In this new century, the United States and Europe reaffirm that commitment, and renew our great alliance of freedom.

May God bless you all. (Applause.)

END 2:39 P.M. (Local)

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