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Not sure if you can even check email -- but here is the latest of the Annapolis speech. This draft is with Dan and fact checking still. Thanks

Remarks on the War on Terror  
Wednesday, November 30, 2005  
Draft #5

Thank you all for that warm welcome. It is good to be back at the United States Naval Academy. This is my third visit to Annapolis as President – and a lot has changed over the years. Before I spoke here in 2001, Navy football went 0 and 10. Last year, you went 10 and 2. It seems that whenever I visit to Annapolis, you end up at the White House to receive a Commander-in-Chief's trophy. This year, Navy is 6 and 4 ... you beat Air Force ... and in a few days you play Army. As Commander in Chief of *all* the Armed Forces, I am not here to take sides – but for some reason, I do not think it is a coincidence that the Superintendent invited me to Annapolis today.

I have come to thank for your service to our country at a time when our country needs you. This is the first year that every Midshipman at this Academy signed up after the attacks of September 11, 2001. On that terrible day, you saw the future the terrorists intend for us – and decided it was up to you to stop them. I thank you for that courageous decision to serve. You have volunteered to wear the uniform in a time of war – knowing all the risks and dangers that accompany military service. Our citizens are grateful for your devotion to duty – and America is proud of the men and women of the United States Naval Academy.

### **Acknowledgments**

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Six months ago, I came here to address the graduating class of 2005. I spoke to them about the threats to our Nation, and the war on terror they were about to join. I told the class of 2005 that four years at this Academy had prepared them morally, mentally, and physically for the challenges ahead. And now, they are meeting those challenges as officers in the United States Navy and Marine Corps.

Some of your former classmates are training with Navy SEAL teams that will storm terrorist safe houses in lightning raids. Others are preparing to lead Marine rifle platoons that will hunt the enemy in the mountains of Afghanistan and the streets of Iraqi cities. Others are training as members of the Navy Medical Corps who will care for our forces wounded in battle.

Still others are training as Naval aviators who will fly combat missions over the skies of Afghanistan and Iraq – and as sailors who will deliver the combat power of the United States Navy to the farthest regions of the world. Whatever their chosen mission, every graduate of the class of 2005 is bringing honor to the uniform – and helping to bring us victory in the war on terror.

In the years ahead, you will join them in the fight. Your service is needed in this time of danger for America and the world. We are fighting the terrorists across the world. Yet the terrorists have made clear – in videos, and audiotapes, and letters and declarations – that Iraq is the central front in their war against humanity. And so we must recognize Iraq as the central front in the war on terror.

As we fight the enemy in Iraq, every man and woman who volunteers to defend our Nation deserves an unwavering commitment to the mission – and a clear strategy for victory. A clear strategy begins with a clear understanding of the enemy we face. The enemy in Iraq is a combination of Sunni rejectionists, former regime loyalists, and foreign terrorists. The Sunni rejectionists are by far the largest group. These are ordinary Sunni Iraqis who enjoyed a privileged status under the regime of Saddam Hussein – and they reject an Iraq in which they are no longer the dominant group. Most boycotted the January elections – yet as democracy takes hold in Iraq, many are beginning to recognize that opting out of the democratic process has hurt their interests. Today, the number of Sunnis who choose peaceful participation over violent opposition is increasing. And we believe that, over time, many more in this group can be persuaded to support a democratic Iraq with a federal government that is strong enough to protect minority rights.

The second group is smaller, but more determined. It is made up of former regime loyalists who held positions of power under Saddam Hussein – and who still harbor dreams of restoring a defeated dictatorship. These hard-core Ba'athists are fomenting anti-democratic sentiment among the larger Sunni community, and they will never be won over to support a free Iraq. Yet they are powerless to stop Iraq's democratic progress – and over time, they can be neutralized and defeated by the security forces of a free Iraq.

The third group is the smallest, but by far the most dangerous: the

foreign terrorists who are coming to fight freedom's progress in Iraq. This group includes terrorists from Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, and other countries – and they are responsible for most of the suicide bombings, beheadings, and others atrocities we see on television. They are led by a brutal terrorist named Zarqawi – al-Qaida's chief of operations in Iraq – who reports to Osama bin Laden. Their objective is to drive U.S. and Coalition forces out of Iraq, and use the vacuum that would be created by an American retreat to gain control of that country. They would then use Iraq as a base from which to launch attacks against America, overthrow moderate governments in the region, and establish a radical Islamic empire that reaches from Indonesia to Spain. This is the same enemy that struck the United States on September 11... blew up commuters in London and Madrid ... massacred tourists in Bali ... killed workers in Riyadh ... and bombed guests at a wedding in Amman, Jordan. This is an enemy without conscience – and no concession of America can appease them. Against such an adversary, there is only one effective response: We will never back down. We will never give in. And we will never accept anything less than complete victory.

To achieve victory over such enemies, we are pursuing a comprehensive strategy in Iraq. Most of our strategy is classified, and for good reason: We do not want our adversaries to learn the details of our plan to defeat them. Yet Americans need to know the broad outlines of our strategy in Iraq – how we look at the war, how we define victory, how we see the enemy, and what we are doing to prevail. So today, I am releasing an unclassified overview called the “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq.” This document is posted on the White House website – [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov) – and I urge all Americans to read it.

Our strategy in Iraq is founded on three key elements: We are on the offensive against the terrorists and insurgents – killing and capturing enemy fighters, clearing out of areas of enemy control, and denying them safe-havens. We are building up the Iraq Security Forces – so they can hold territory freed from insurgents and terrorists, and assume increasing responsibility for the security of their nation. And we are marginalizing the terrorists and insurgents – by helping the Iraqi people build a lasting democracy that protects the rights all of its citizens. Iraqis and Americans share a common enemy – and Americans will be safer at home when that enemy is defeated in Iraq.

Today, I want to speak in depth about one element of this strategy that will be critical in our victory over the terrorists and insurgents: the training of the Iraqi Security Forces. Our strategy in Iraq is based on a clear premise: Breaking the back of the terrorists requires a strong Iraqi military and police. Iraqi troops bring skills and knowledge to the fight that Coalition forces cannot. Iraqis know their people, they know their language, they know their culture – and they know who the terrorists are. Iraqi forces have the trust of their countrymen – who are willing to help them in the fight against the terrorists and insurgents. As the Iraqi forces grow in number, they are helping us to keep a better hold on the cities we have taken from the enemy. And as the Iraqi forces grow more capable, they are increasingly taking the lead in the fight against the terrorists.

The training of the Iraqi Security Forces is an enormous task, and it has not always gone smoothly. Yet in the past year, these forces have made dramatic progress. At this time last year, there were only a handful of Iraqi battalions ready for combat. Now, there are 123 Iraqi Army and Special Police battalions in the fight against the terrorists – each comprised of about 800 Iraqi forces. Of these, 81 Iraqi battalions are fighting side-by-side with Coalition forces, and 42 others are taking the lead in the fight. These 42 battalions are controlling their own battle space, and conducting independent operations against the terrorists – and they are turning the tide of this struggle in freedom’s favor.

The progress of the Iraqi forces is especially vivid when last year’s assault in Fallujah is compared with the recent anti-terrorist operations in Tal Afar. In Fallujah, the assault was led by nine Coalition battalions made up primarily of United States Marines – with five Iraqi battalions following behind. In most situations, the Iraqi role was limited to protecting the flanks of Coalition forces, and securing ground that had already been cleared by our troops. This year in Tal Afar, it was a very different story. The assault was led by the Iraqi Security Forces. Eleven Iraqi Army battalions went into battle against the terrorists, backed by five Coalition battalions providing support. The Iraqis units conducted their own independent operations, and controlled their own battle space – breaking down doors, hunting for insurgents, and securing neighborhoods block-by-block. One of the Iraqi soldiers who fought in Tal Afar was a private named Tarek Hazem. This brave Iraqi fighter says: “We were not afraid. We are here to protect our country. All we feel is motivated to kill the terrorists.” Iraqi forces not only cleared the city of insurgents, they held it. And because of

their courage, the citizens of Tal Afar were able to vote in October's Constitutional referendum without terrorist intimidation.

As Iraqi forces take the lead in the fight with the terrorists, they are also taking control of more and more Iraqi territory. At this moment, 33 Iraqi Army battalions have assumed control of their own areas of responsibility. In Baghdad, 13 Iraqi battalions have taken over major sectors of the capital – including some of the city's toughest neighborhoods. In April, the highway leading to the Baghdad airport was one of the most dangerous roads in the world – with dozens killed and injured in terrorist ambushes. Then an Iraqi mechanized police brigade began patrolling the road 24 hours a day, seven days a week – and transformed it into one of the safest routes in Iraq. Earlier this year, the area around Baghdad's Haifa street was teeming with insurgents – until Iraqi forces took responsibility for this dangerous neighborhood and cleared out the terrorists. Today, Iraqi forces control Haifa street, the airport road, and roughly ninety square miles of Baghdad province – almost half of the area in and around the Iraqi capital. And they are making similar strides in other parts of Iraq. [Eight Iraqi battalions have taken over responsibility for areas in South-Central Iraq ... three battalions have taken control of sectors of Southeast Iraq ... four battalions have taken control of sectors in Western Iraq ... and three are in control of sectors in Northern Iraq.] As Iraqi forces take responsibility for more of their own territory, Coalition forces are free to move elsewhere in Iraq – and eventually to move home.

As our Coalition hands over more and more territory to Iraqi Forces, we are also withdrawing from forward operating bases and transferring them to Iraqi control. Already, more than [15] bases in Iraq have been handed over to the Iraqi government – including Saddam Hussein's palace in Tikrit, which has served as the Coalition headquarters in one of Iraq's most dangerous regions. In the next few months, our Coalition will hand over a half-dozen more bases. From these independent bases, the Iraqi Security Forces are planning and executing their own operations against the terrorists – and bringing security and pride to the Iraqi people.

This progress by the Iraqi Security Forces has come, in part, because of changes we made in the way we train Iraqi troops. When our Coalition first arrived, we created an Iraqi Army to defend the country from external threats, and an Iraqi Civil Defense Corps to help provide the security within Iraq's borders. The civil defense forces were no match for terrorists and

insurgents armed with machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and mortars. So we changed our approach. We moved the civil defense forces into the Iraqi Army, changed the way we trained them, and focused the Army's mission on defeating the insurgents. Now, all Iraqi Army recruits receive the same length of basic training as new recruits in the U.S. Army – a five-week core course, followed by an additional three-to-seven weeks of specialized training. We have established branch schools for the Iraqi military services ... an Iraqi Joint Staff College ... a non-commissioned officer academy ... a military police school ... and a bomb disposal school. We have also increased our focus on leadership training – with professional development courses for Iraqi squad leaders, platoon sergeants, warrant officers, and sergeants-major. We are training a new generation of Iraqi officers, who will lead their forces with skill – so they can defeat the terrorists and secure their freedom.

Similar changes have taken place in the training of the Iraqi police. When our Coalition first arrived, Iraqi police recruits spent seventy-five percent of their training time in classroom lectures – and they received limited training in the use of hand guns. So we changed the way the Iraqi police are trained. Now, police recruits spend most of their time outside the classroom – with intensive hands-on training in anti-terrorism operations and real-world survival skills. Iraq now has five police academies, and one in Jordan, that together produce over 3,500 new police officers every eight weeks. The Baghdad police academy has a model roadblock, an IED alley, and other simulation models where Iraqi police can prepare for situations they will experience in the field. And because Iraqi police are not just facing common criminals, they are getting live-fire training with the AK-47s they need to fight the terrorists.

As more and more skilled Iraqi Security Forces come online, we have been able to make another important change in the way new Iraqi recruits are trained. When our training effort began, nearly all the trainers came from Coalition countries. Today, the vast majority of Iraqi police and army recruits are being taught by Iraqi officers. By training the trainers, we are creating an institutional capability that will allow the Iraqi Security Forces to continue to develop and grow long after Coalition forces have left Iraq.

As our training has improved, so has the quality of the recruits being trained. There is no shortage of Iraqis who want to serve their nation in uniform – and as more and more step forward to join the security forces of

a free Iraq, admission to the training academies has become increasingly competitive. We have established a rigorous vetting process – and our high standards mean we now reject, on average, between one-quarter to one-third of Iraqi police recruits. When we began, our training program was focused on generating new Iraqi forces quickly. Now, we are focused on preparing Iraqi forces to take the lead in the fight with the terrorists.

As the Iraqi Security Forces become more capable, we are also working to make them more representative of their country – by increasing the number of Sunni recruits. These efforts got a significant boost recently, when more than sixty influential Sunni clerics issued a fatwa calling on young Sunnis to join the Iraqi Army and police, quote “for the sake of preserving the souls, property and honor” of the Iraqi people. By encouraging more Sunnis to join the Iraqi Security Forces instead of fighting against them, these religious leaders are helping bring peace and stability to Iraq. And we will continue working to ensure that the security forces are ready to serve, protect, and defend *all* the Iraqi people.

Some critics dismiss this progress – and point to the fact that only one Iraqi battalion has met the very high standard of complete independence from the Coalition. Reaching this level of complete independence is extremely difficult – and the fact that few have done so is not a reflection on the combat skills of the Iraqi units. To meet the standard of complete independence, an Iraqi battalion must do more than fight the terrorists on its own – it must also have the ability to provide its own support elements, including logistics, airlift, intelligence, and command and control. This is a standard that some battalions from NATO militaries would not be able to meet.

We are helping more Iraqi units reach this highest level of readiness, by helping Iraqis build the institutions they need to support their own forces. For example, we have established a national depot in city of Tadjji that is responsible for supplying the logistical needs of ten divisions of the Iraqi Army. We have created regional support units and base support units across the country whose mission it is to supply their own war fighters. We have trained 650 Medics, built 10 new military clinics, and established a Medical Officer Basic Course help teach Iraqis how to treat their soldiers wounded in battle. Iraqis now have a small but capable Air Force, that recently conducted its first combat airlift operations – bringing Iraqi troops to the front in Tal Afar. We have established an Iraqi Army Support and

Services Institute to train Iraqi medics, mechanics, and supply personnel. We have established an Iraqi Military Intelligence School to produce skilled Iraqi intelligence analysts and collectors. Our focus is on developing institutions that will last when Coalition forces have gone home. And by taking these steps, we are helping the Iraqi Security Forces become self-supporting – so they can bring the fight to the enemy ... and sustain themselves in that fight.

The transformation of the Iraqi Security Forces over the past year has been remarkable – and Iraqi soldiers take pride in their progress. An Iraqi First Lieutenant named Shoqutt describes the transformation of his unit this way: “I really think we’ve turned the corner here. At first, the whole country didn’t take us seriously.... Now things are different. Our guys are hungry to demonstrate their skill and show the world.”

Our troops in Iraq see the progress. b(3) 10 USC 130b  
trained a group of Iraqi soldiers in Baghdad – who then helped capture a terrorist financier and cell leader. He says of the troops he prepared for battle: “You could see the confidence in the Iraqi soldiers. These Iraqi army soldiers are our new heroes. They are patriots of Iraq who decided enough was enough.”

Our Commanders on the ground see the progress. General Marty Dempsey is the commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command. Here is what he says this about the transformation of the Iraqi Security Forces: “It’s beyond description.... They are far better equipped, far better trained” than they were one year ago. The Iraqis, General Dempsey says, are “increasingly in control of their future and their own security .... the Iraqi security forces are regaining control of the country.”

Standing up capable Iraqi Security Forces takes time, patience, and hard work – and there is much more work to be done. Yet the facts in Iraq are clear: Every month, every week, every day, the Iraqi Security Forces are taking over more and more responsibility. As the Iraqi Security Forces stand up, their confidence is growing – and they are taking on tougher and more important missions on their own. As the Iraqi Security Forces stand up, the confidence of Iraqi civilians is growing – and more Iraqis are providing vital intelligence needed to track down the terrorists and insurgents. And as the Iraqi Security Forces stand up, Coalition forces can stand down – and when the mission of defeating the terrorists in Iraq is

complete, our troops will return to a proud and grateful nation.

This is a goal our Iraqi allies share. An Iraqi Army Sergeant named Abbass Abdul Jabar puts it this way: “We have to help the coalition forces as much as we can to give them a chance to go home. These guys have been helping us. [Now] we have to protect our families.” We will help the Iraqis so they can protect their families and defeat the insurgents. We will stay as long as necessary to complete the mission – and not a day longer. If our military leaders tell me we need more troops, I will send them. But that is not what my commanders tell me. They tell me that as Iraqi forces become more capable, the mission of our forces in Iraq will gradually change. We will shift from providing security and conducting operations against insurgents and terrorists nationwide, to conducting more specialized operations targeted at the most dangerous terrorists. As we make this shift, our troop levels in Iraq will decrease. Over the next year, we expect that our troop levels will change significantly, as the political process advances and Iraqi Security Forces gain experience. But these decisions will be driven by the conditions on the ground in Iraq, and the good judgment of my commanders – not by artificial timetables set by politicians in Washington.

As Iraqis take more responsibility in the battle with the terrorists, they are building a democracy that is worthy of their sacrifice. Iraqis are fighting bravely because they are fighting for something worthwhile: the free future of their country. And the courage of Iraqis in uniform is matched by the courage of Iraqi civilians who refuse to let the car bombers and assassins stop them from building the Arab world’s first democracy.

The world saw the courage of the Iraqi people in January, when millions defied the terrorists to vote for a transitional government in free elections. In October, Iraqis showed their courage again – returning to the polls in overwhelming numbers to vote for a constitution that guarantees fundamental freedoms and lays the foundation for a lasting democracy. And fifteen days from now, Iraqis will brave the terrorists to cast their ballots once more – this time to choose a new government, under their new constitution, that will lead them for the next four years.

The December elections will be the culmination of an amazing political transformation. In just two-and-a-half years, Iraqis will have gone from living under the boot of a brutal tyrant ... to liberation ... free elections

... a democratic constitution ... and a constitutional government. Iraqis are building a future founded on democracy and peace. And as the Iraqi people build a free society in the heart of the Middle East, the United States of America will help them succeed.

With each step forward on the road to democracy, the Iraqi people have defied the skeptics, and have grown in confidence and unity. In January, the vast majority of Sunnis refused to vote. Nine months later, millions of Sunnis participated in the Constitutional referendum. And major Sunni parties have already formed coalitions to compete in the December elections. Iraqis are learning to settle their differences through discussion and compromise instead of at the barrel of a gun – and that is the key to lasting freedom.

With each step forward on the road to democracy, the Iraqi people have delivered crushing blows to the terrorists. The terrorists have tried to derail the political process at every stage – and at every stage they have failed. With their ballots, Iraqis are defeating a brutal enemy ... rejecting a murderous ideology ... and choosing liberty over terror. They are moving forward – despite the costs, the pain, and the danger. By the millions, they have said to the terrorists: The Iraqi people will not be intimidated. The Iraqi people will determine the destiny of their country. The future of Iraq belongs to freedom.

Victory in Iraq will take more time, more patience and more resolve. And as the future officers of the United States Navy and Marine Corps, you are preparing to join this fight. You do so at a time when there is a vigorous debate about the war in Iraq. I know that for our men and women in uniform, this debate can be unsettling – when you are risking your life to accomplish a mission, the last thing you want is to hear that mission being questioned in our Nation's capital. I want you to know that while there may be a lot of heated rhetoric in Washington, D.C., one thing is not in dispute: The American people stand behind you. And we should not fear the debate in Washington. It is one of the great strengths of our democracy that we can discuss our differences openly and honestly – even at times of war. Questioning the decisions of our leaders is the hallmark of a free people. Your service makes that freedom possible – and today, because of the men and women in our military, people are expressing their opinions freely in the streets of Baghdad as well.

Most Americans want two things in Iraq: They want to see our troops to come home as soon as possible – and they want victory. These are my goals as well. In World War II, victory came when Empire of Japan surrendered on the deck of the USS Missouri. In Iraq, there will not be a signing ceremony on the deck of a battleship. Victory will come when the terrorists and insurgents can no longer threaten the stability of Iraq ... when the Iraqi Security Forces can provide for the safety of their own citizens ... and when Iraqis is a strong democracy and an ally in the war on terror. We will leave Iraq but we will not abandon Iraq – and when our troops come home, they will leave behind a free Iraqi nation that will add to the stability of the Middle East and the security of the American people.

Some are calling for a more precipitous withdrawal. Those advocating a timetable for withdrawing our troops are sincere – but I believe they are sincerely wrong. As Democratic Senator Joseph Lieberman said recently, setting an artificial timetable would “discourage our troops because it seems to be heading for the door. It will encourage the terrorists, and it will confuse the Iraqi people.” Senator Lieberman is right. Setting a deadline to withdraw would send the message across the world that America is a weak and unreliable ally. Setting a deadline to withdraw would send a signal to our enemies – that if they wait long enough, America will cut and run and abandon its friends. And setting a deadline to withdraw would vindicate the terrorists’ tactics of beheadings, suicide bombings, and mass murder – and invite new attacks on America. To all who wear the uniform, I make this pledge: This will not happen so long as I am your Commander in Chief.

You and I know the stakes in Iraq. Freedom’s victory in that country will spread hope across a troubled region ... inspire democratic reformers from Damascus to Tehran ... and help lift a terrible threat from the lives of our children and grandchildren. By strengthening Iraqi democracy, we will gain a partner in the cause of peace and moderation in the Muslim world.

This is a difficult mission – and before it is accomplished, there will more tough days ahead. A time of war is a time of sacrifice – and we have lost some very good men and women in the war on terror. Many of you know comrades and classmates who left our shores to defend freedom and did not live to make the journey home. We pray for the military families who mourn the loss of loves ones. We hold them in our hearts – and we honor the memory of every fallen soldiers, sailor, airman, and Marine.

One of those fallen heroes is a Marine Corporal named Jeff Starr, who was killed fighting the terrorists in Ramadi earlier this year. After he died, a letter was found on his laptop computer. Here is what he wrote: “[I]f you are reading this, then I have died in Iraq .... I don’t regret going. Everybody dies, but few get to do it for something as important as freedom. It may seem confusing why we are in Iraq, it’s not to me. I’m here helping these people, so that they can live the way we live. Not [to] have to worry about tyrants or vicious dictators.... Others have died for my freedom, now this is my mark.”

There is only one way to honor the sacrifice of Corporal Starr and his fallen comrades – and that is to take up their mantle, carry on their fight, and complete their mission. Our Nation will uphold the cause for which these brave Americans gave their lives. We will take the fight to the terrorists. We will help the Iraqi people lay foundations of a strong democracy that can govern itself, sustain itself and defend itself. And by laying the foundations of freedom in Iraq, we will lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

You are the ones who will help accomplish all of this. Our freedom and way of life are in your hands – and they are in the best of hands. Thank you for your service in the cause of freedom. Thank you for wearing the uniform. God bless you. And may God bless the United States of America.

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[Some of our critics continue to assert that we have no plan in Iraq except to “stay the course.” If by “stay the course” they mean we will not allow the terrorists to break our will, they are right. If by “stay the course” they mean that we will allow men like Zarqawi and bin Laden to turn Iraq into what Afghanistan was under the Taliban: a safe haven for terrorism, and a launching pad for attacks on America – they are right. But if by “stay the course” they mean that we are not adjusting our strategy to meet the challenges on the ground, they are being willfully misleading. As General Casey has said, “Our commanders on the ground are continuously

adapting and adjusting, not only to what the enemy does, but also to try and outthink the enemy and get ahead of him.”]

