

## Operation Iraqi Freedom: Three Years Later

"These past three years have tested our resolve. We've seen hard days and setbacks. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, the terrorists made Iraq the central front in the war on terror, in an attempt to turn that country into a safe haven where they can plan more attacks against America. ... More fighting and sacrifice will be required to achieve this victory, and for some, the temptation to retreat and abandon our commitments is strong. Yet there is no peace, there's no honor, and there's no security in retreat. So America will not abandon Iraq to the terrorists who want to attack us again. We will finish the mission. By defeating the terrorists in Iraq, we will bring greater security to our own country. And when victory is achieved, our troops will return home with the honor they have earned."

- President George W. Bush, President's Radio Address, 3/18/06

### Remarkable Progress Has Been Made In Iraq In The Last Three Years

**On March 19, 2003, United States And Coalition Forces Launched Operation Iraqi Freedom.** Life in Iraq under Saddam Hussein was marked by brutality, fear, and terror. Iraqis had no voice in their country or their lives. Saddam Hussein devastated Iraq, wrecked its economy, ruined and plundered its infrastructure, and destroyed its human capital.

**Three Years Later, Iraq Has A Democratically Elected Government.** The reign of a dictator has been replaced by a democratically elected government operating under one of the most progressive constitutions in the Arab world. Millions of Iraqis have joined the political process over the past year alone. The transition from three decades of dictatorship to a fully functioning democracy is still difficult, and Iraq must overcome many more challenges before it fully secures its democratic gains.

➤ **Saddam Hussein Is Facing Justice In An Iraqi Court.** The Iraqi people are holding Saddam accountable for his crimes and atrocities.

**The Next Year Will Bring A Consolidation Of These Gains, Helping A New Iraqi Government Stabilize The Nation And Build A Solid Foundation For Democracy And Increased Economic Growth.** Iraq's elected leaders are diligently working to form a government that will represent all the Iraqi people. As the Iraqi government comes together and Iraqi Security Forces continue improving their readiness, efforts to stabilize the nation will increasingly be Iraqi-led. We will support the Iraqi government in these difficult times, and we will keep our commitment to the Iraqi people.

### **Securing A Lasting Victory In Iraq Will Make America:**

- **Safer** by depriving terrorists of a safe haven from which they can plan and launch attacks against the United States and American interests overseas.
- **More Secure** by facilitating reform in a region that for decades has been a source of violence and stagnation and depriving terrorist control over a hub of the world's economy.
- **Stronger** by demonstrating to our friends and enemies the reliability of U.S. power, the strength of our commitment to our friends, and the tenacity of resolve against our enemies.

**Despite Progress, The Situation On The Ground Remains Tense.** As al Qaida's actions and statements show, terrorists reject democracy, reject peace, and want to impose their own concept of a dictatorial government on the Iraqi people. The United States and its Coalition partners are united in support of the Iraqi people and helping them win their struggle for freedom. The terrorists know they lack the military strength to challenge Iraqi and Coalition forces directly – so their only hope is to try and provoke a civil war. Immediately after the attack on the Golden Mosque of Samarra, the Iraqi people looked into the abyss and did not like what they saw. Iraqis have shown the world they want a future of freedom and peace – and they will oppose a violent minority that seeks to take that future away from them by tearing their country apart.

**The President's National Strategy For Victory In Iraq Has Three Tracks – Political, Security, And Economic.** All three tracks are progressing. Access the National Strategy for Victory at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq\\_strategy\\_nov2005.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq_strategy_nov2005.html).

### **The Political Track: Iraq Has Transitioned From Tyranny And Oppression To Freedom And Democracy**

**Three Years Ago, Iraqis Had No Voice In Their Government Or Their Nation's Future.** Simple acts like voicing concerns about bad policies or organizing a meeting were denied. Citizens feared arbitrary arrest, torture, and imprisonment. Thousands of innocent Iraqis ended up in mass graves.

**Today, Millions Of Iraqis Are Shaping Their Own Destinies By Participating In Iraq's Political Process:**

- **Iraqis Completed Two Successful Nationwide Elections And A National Constitutional Referendum In 2005.** Each successive election experienced less violence, bigger voter turnout, and broader political participation. On December 15, more than 11 million people – more than 75 percent of the Iraqi voting-age population – participated in the election for a new government under Iraq's new constitution, an increase of more than three million voters over the January election.
- **Iraqi Voters Approved A New Permanent Constitution.** Iraq's new permanent constitution, approved on October 15, 2005, provides a solid legal framework, based on a democratic process and inclusiveness, which the Iraqi people are working to strengthen.
- **Iraqi Leaders Are Now Forming A National Government.** The December election resulted in a representative parliament and offers Iraqis an opportunity to build a national unity government. Iraqi leaders continue working on forming a new broad-based, inclusive government in furtherance of their commitment to democratic principles.

### **The Security Track: Iraqi Security Forces Are Increasingly Taking The Lead To Protect Their Nation**

**Three Years Ago, Saddam Hussein And The Ba'ath Party Were Preserving The Regime's Tyrannical Rule.** Under Saddam Hussein's rule, the Iraqi army was used as an instrument of repression against Iraq's own citizens and against Iraq's neighbors.

**Today, An All-Volunteer Iraqi Security Force Is Taking Increasing Responsibility For Protecting Their New Nation And The Iraqi People:**

- **Trained Iraqi Security Forces Are Growing In Number And Assuming A Larger Role.** More than 240,000 Iraqi security forces have been trained and equipped and are working to protect their fellow citizens. Iraqi Security Forces demonstrate growing competence and capability, and over 90 percent of Iraqis say they support their efforts to bring stability to the country. Over 112,000 Iraqi soldiers, sailors, and airmen have now been trained and equipped. More than 87,000 police have been trained and equipped. These police work alongside over 40,000 other Ministry of Interior forces.
- **Additional Iraqi Army And Special Operations Battalions Are Conducting Operations.** Last fall, there were over 120 Iraqi Army and Police combat battalions in the fight against the enemy – and 40 of those were taking the lead in the fight. Today, the number of battalions in the fight has increased to more than 130 – with more than 60 taking the lead. As more Iraqi battalions come online, these forces are assuming responsibility for more territory. Iraqi forces now conduct more independent operations throughout the country than do Coalition forces.

**The Terrorists Are Turning To Weapons Of Fear Because They Know They Cannot Defeat Us Militarily.** After the terrorists were defeated in the battles in Fallujah and Tal Afar, they saw they could not confront Iraqi or American forces in pitched battle and survive. So they turned to IEDs – a weapon that allows them to attack from a safe distance, without having to face our forces in battle. Innocent Iraqis are the principal victims of IEDs. Our strategy to defeat IEDs has three

elements: targeting and eliminating terrorists and bomb-makers; providing our forces specialized training to identify and clear IEDs before they explode; and developing new technologies to defend against IEDs.

- **Coalition Efforts To Defeat IEDs Are Producing Results.** Today, nearly half of IEDs in Iraq are found and disabled before they can be detonated – and in the past 18 months, the casualty rate per IED attack has been cut in half. During the past six months, Iraqi and Coalition forces have found and cleared nearly 4,000 IEDs, uncovered more than 1,800 weapons caches and bomb-making plants, and killed or detained hundreds of terrorists and bomb-makers.

### The Economic Track: Iraq's Economy, Infrastructure, And Quality Of Life Is Improving

**Three Years Ago, Saddam Hussein And His Regime Led A Life Of Privilege And Luxury, While Leaving The Iraqi People Without Infrastructure To Provide Essential Services.** Those out of favor were denied the simplest public services, with hunger and essential services used as weapons of tyranny. As a result, parts of Iraq suffered a severe lack of electricity, water, health care, education facilities, and other vital services. While challenges remain, and while it will take years to modernize Iraq's economy and infrastructure in the wake of Saddam Hussein's decades of neglect, significant progress has been made over the past three years.

**Today, Iraq's Economy Is Recovering, And The Iraqi People Have Better Access To Essential Services:**

- **Iraq's Economy Is Recovering, And The Iraqi People's Standard Of Living Is Rising.** Iraq's economy is showing signs of recovery after 30 years of dictatorship. In 2005, the Iraqi economy grew an estimated 2.6 percent in real terms, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has estimated it will grow by more than 10 percent in 2006. Under Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqis' standard of living deteriorated rapidly. In nominal terms, Iraq's per capita income had dropped from \$3,800 in 1980 (higher than Spain at the time) to \$715 in 2002 (lower than Angola). In 2005, per-capita income is estimated to have increased to over \$1,000.
- **Iraq Is Rejoining The International Economic Community.** Iraq is on the road to World Trade Organization accession, has received both an IMF credit facility and its first World Bank loan in 30 years, and has secured a debt agreement with the Paris Club that will lead to the forgiveness of at least 80 percent of about \$40 billion of Saddam Hussein-era debt.
- **Investors Are Optimistic About Iraq's Economic Future.** Foreign and domestic banks are opening new offices, the stock market established in April 2004 currently lists nearly 90 companies, and a total of over 32,000 businesses are now registered in Iraq.
- **More Iraqis Have Access To Clean Water.** 3.1 million Iraqis enjoy improved access to clean water, and 5.1 million have improved access to sewage treatment.
- **Iraq's Education System Is Being Rehabilitated.** More than 30 percent of Iraq's schools have been rehabilitated, more than 36,000 teachers have been trained, and approximately 8.7 million revised math and science textbooks and 3 million school supply kits have been provided to students nationwide.
- **Iraq's Public Health System Is Improving.** Vaccination campaigns have significantly reduced infectious disease outbreaks. For example, 98 percent of children under five have been vaccinated for polio.