

don't see these pictures of what has happened in Iraq in the past—but just one statistic: Over the past 5 years, 400,000 Iraqi children under the age of 5 died of malnutrition and disease, preventively, but died because of the nature of the regime under which they are living. Now, that is why we're acting.

And yes, there are divisions in the international community. There are many people on our side; there are those that oppose us. But that is for us, I'm afraid——

Q. ——why do they——

Prime Minister Blair. Well, I'm afraid, Adam, that is a question to ask to other people as well as to us. All I can tell you is why we are acting and why we believe our cause to be just. And yes, at the end of this whole process, we need to go back over it and ask why this has happened. But I simply say to you that if the world walks away from the security threat facing us and if we back down and take no action against Saddam, think of the signal that would have sent right across the world to every brutal dictator, to every terrorist group.

Now, we believe that we had to act. Others have disagreed. As I say, at some point, we will have to come back, and we'll have to discuss how the disagreement arose. But I have no doubt that we're doing the right thing. I have no doubt that our cause is just, and I have no doubt that were we to walk away from this conflict at this time, we would be doing a huge disservice to future generations.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11 a.m. in the hangar. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Legislation on the Amber Alert System

March 27, 2003

As we take steps abroad to make the world a safer place for all, there are important steps we can take at home to make America a safer place for children.

I commend the House for acting today on legislation that will help expand, enhance, and coordinate the successful Amber Alert system across our Nation. I look forward to legislation reaching my desk as quickly as possible so that I may sign it into law.

The prevention and investigation of child abductions will always be a top priority in my administration. That is why my administration began taking steps last year to expand and improve the Amber Alert system, including allocating existing Federal resources to this effort and appointing a Federal coordinator within the Department of Justice.

Protecting our children is a shared priority for the American people and Federal, State, and local authorities. We must use every resource possible to find and safely return missing children to their families and their homes, just as we will continue to use every tool within the law to vigorously prosecute and severely punish those who would do our children harm.

Remarks to National Veterans' Organizations

March 28, 2003

Good afternoon. Thanks for coming, and welcome to the people's house. It is my honor to welcome distinguished veterans to the White House. I'm especially pleased to have met with leaders from the veterans' organizations at this crucial time for our country.

The men and women who have worn the Nation's uniform set an example of service

and an example of sacrifice for future generations. And the current generation of our military is not letting us down. Today's Armed Forces are upholding the finest traditions of our country and of our military. They are making great progress in the war in Iraq. They are showing great courage, and they are making this country proud.

I'm honored that Tony Principi introduced me. I'm proud of his service to our country, not only as a Vietnam vet but now as the head of the Veterans Affairs—Department of Veterans Affairs. He's doing a really good job.

I want to thank the national commanders and presidents of our national veterans' service organizations for coming. I want to thank you all for your service to your fellow Americans. I appreciate your members being here with us. I'm particularly pleased that Brian Thacker, a Medal of Honor recipient, is with us as well. I want to thank all our vets. I want to thank all the vets who are here.

You're here at a time when our coalition, the United States and our partners, are acting together in a noble purpose. We're out to keep the peace, to make the world more peaceful, to make our Nation and other nations more secure, and we're going to free the people of Iraq from the clutches of Saddam Hussein and his murderous allies.

We are sending a clear signal to the world that we will not submit to a future in which dictators and terrorists can arm and threaten the peace without consequence. We are enforcing the demands of the United Nations, and we refuse to leave the Iraqi people in slavery under Saddam Hussein. When the war in Iraq is won, all who have joined this cause will be able to say to the Iraqi people, "We were proud to fight for your freedom."

The regime that once terrorized all of Iraq now controls a small portion of that country. Coalition troops continue their steady advance and are drawing nearer to Baghdad. We're inflicting severe damage on enemy forces. We are now fighting the most desperate units of the dictator's army. The fierce fighting currently underway will demand further courage and further sacrifice. Yet we know the outcome of this battle: The Iraqi regime will be disarmed; the Iraqi regime

will be removed from power; Iraq will be free.

In the last week, we have seen the brutal and cruel nature of a dying regime. In areas still under its control, the regime continues its rule by terror. Prisoners of war have been brutalized and executed. Iraqis who refuse to fight for the regime are being murdered. Some in the Iraqi military have pretended to surrender and then opened fire on coalition forces that were willing to show them mercy.

Given the nature of this regime, we expect such war crimes, but we will not excuse them. War criminals will be hunted relentlessly and judged severely.

In the last week, we have also seen the nature of the young men and women who fight on our behalf. Coalition forces have begun delivering food and water to liberated parts of Iraq. I was pleased to hear today that the United Nations Security Council acted to resume food and medical supplies under the existing U.N. program, which will bring urgent relief to millions of Iraqis.

We care about the human condition of the people who have suffered under Saddam Hussein. We provided \$60 million to the World Food Program to help get this humanitarian effort up and running. We're shipping hundreds of thousands of metric tons of food to Iraq. In every possible way, coalition forces are showing kindness and respect to the Iraqi people. They're going to extraordinary lengths to spare the lives of the innocent. We treat wounded Iraqi soldiers.

The contrast could not be greater between the honorable conduct of our forces and the criminal acts of the enemy. Every Iraqi atrocity has confirmed the justice and the urgency of our cause. Against this enemy we will accept no outcome except complete victory.

To meet this outcome, we must give our armed services the support and the resources they require. As veterans, all of you understand the importance of a well-supplied and well-trained fighting force. I've asked Congress for a nearly \$75 billion wartime supplemental appropriations bill. This funding would provide fuel for ships and aircraft and tanks, supplies for our troops in the theater of operations, new high-tech munitions to replace the ones we have used in this war. The

supplemental would also provide funds to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq and to help protect the American homeland in this time of high alert.

I want to thank the veterans' groups for their strong support, unwavering support, for this wartime supplemental, and I call upon the United States Congress to pass the supplemental as quickly as possible.

I also appreciate all the veterans are doing for America's military families in time of hardship. I appreciate your compassion. Across our country, local chapters of the American Legion, for example, are stepping forward to help those families in practical ways, from making household repairs to helping with child care. Members of the VFW and Auxiliary are sending care packages with baby supplies to military families. Operation Uplink program is helping thousands of service members keep in touch with their loved ones.

Both the American Legion and the VFW are working with the USA Freedom Corps on a project called "On The Home Front." This effort will match Americans who want to volunteer their times and skills with the military families who need help. Because of all this generosity, our men and women serving overseas will know that their loved ones are not facing this time alone.

I want to thank the veterans' groups for understanding the compassion needed to help those who are here, wondering and worrying about their loved ones overseas. The people who serve in the military are giving their best to this country, and we have the responsibility to give them our full support, our full support not only here in Washington, DC, but our support all across the country.

I want to thank each veteran here today and across our land for the lifetime of service you have given our Nation. I thank you for standing behind the men and women of today's Armed Forces as they fight for the liberty of an oppressed people, for the security of the United States and our friends and allies, and for the peace of the world. May God bless our troops.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:44 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

**Executive Order 13293—
Amendment to Executive Order
10448, Establishing the National
Defense Service Medal**

March 28, 2003

By the authority vested in me as President of the United States and as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, and in order to extend eligibility for the award of the National Defense Service Medal to members in good standing in the Selected Reserve of the Armed Forces of the United States, it is hereby ordered that Executive Order 10448 of April 22, 1953, as amended, is further amended:

1. by inserting "or service in good standing in the Selected Reserve of the Armed Forces" after "active military service" each place it appears; and
2. by striking "additional period of active duty" and inserting in lieu thereof "additional period."

Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect the exercise of authority granted by Executive Order 12776 of October 8, 1991.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 28, 2003.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:33 a.m., March 31, 2003]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 1.

**Executive Order 13294—
Regulations Relating to Hazardous
Duty Incentive Pay, Aviation Career
Incentive Pay, and Submarine Duty
Incentive Pay**

March 28, 2003

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 301, 301a, and 301c of title 37, United States