

Morale of the Troops

Q. How was the morale of the marines and sailors?

The President. It's good. The Marines are a tough group—a tough group—as you know. And a lot of the troops wanted to get healed quickly so they could go back with their units. It's an amazing thing when you see a person wounded, sitting there in a wheelchair or bound up in bandages or these different looking metal things sticking out of them to hold them together—a young man look you in the eye and say, “I can't wait to get back to my unit. I hope I'm healed fast enough to get back to Iraq.”

It's a brave lot here in Bethesda, people who are willing to sacrifice for something greater than themselves. And I feel lucky as an American to be a part of a country where citizens are willing to do that.

I reminded them and their families that the war in Iraq is—it's really about peace, trying to make the world more peaceful. This victory in Iraq, when it happens, will make the world more peaceful. I reminded them that their sacrifices really had to do with the security of our country, that Saddam Hussein and his terrorist allies are threats to America, threats to our people because of what we believe in.

I also reminded them that their courageous sacrifice will help young Iraqis grow up in a free society, that out of the chaos that takes place there now and after the fear of a Saddam Hussein and his thugs, that the Iraqi people will run their own country, make their own decisions, choose their own leaders, and will become a country at peace with others in the neighborhood.

And so their sacrifices, as I told them, were worthwhile. And it's an honor to have spoken to them and to have been with them and their families today.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. in the lobby at the National Naval Medical Center. In his remarks, he referred to former President Sad-

dam Hussein of Iraq; and Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Congressional Action on the Budget Resolution

April 11, 2003

I commend House and Senate negotiators for their hard work and success in ensuring that the Congress has a budget resolution in place that reflects my priorities of winning the war against terrorism, protecting Americans at home, and strengthening economic growth. I particularly congratulate Chairmen Nickles and Nussle for their leadership, not only in accomplishing agreement but in doing so ahead of schedule. The compromise budget resolution funds our priorities, restrains spending, and provides opportunity for passage of a robust jobs-and-growth package. I commend the House for passing this measure and look forward to prompt passage in the Senate.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Comprehensive Energy Legislation

April 11, 2003

I commend the House for passing comprehensive and balanced energy legislation. The House legislation will increase America's energy independence by diversifying our sources of renewable energy, expanding new technology, and increasing environmentally responsible exploration. This bill is a major step forward in the effort to secure our Nation's energy future, in keeping with my National Energy Policy. I look forward to prompt Senate action and to working to ensure that fiscally responsible legislation to reduce our reliance on foreign sources of energy can be brought to my desk.